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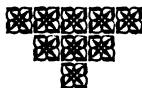


*Considerations on mysteries of the faith
[extr. from Libro de la oración y ...*

Luis



CONSIDERATIONS.





The Mystery of Mysteries.

CONSIDERATIONS
ON
Mysteries of the Faith :

NEWLY TRANSLATED AND ABRIDGED
FROM THE ORIGINAL SPANISH OF
LUIS DE GRANADA.

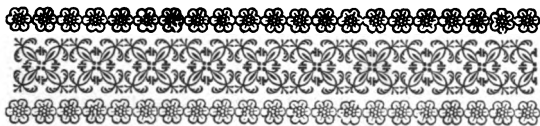
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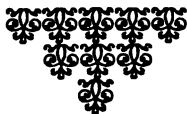
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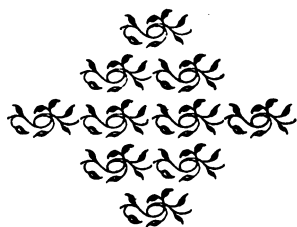
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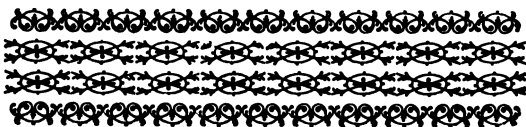
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Considerations, Etc.

First Consideration.

OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF OURSELVES.

*Of the Knowledge of Ourselves and of our Sins:
Of the Consideration of our Sins: Of the
Number of our Sins: Of some Means where-
by Self-knowledge is attained: Of the Con-
tempt a Man should feel for himself.*

Of the Knowledge of Ourselves and of our Sins.

 THE first thing which thou must try to obtain is, a perfect knowledge of thyself and of thy sins; by which alone canst thou hope to attain perfect penitence and sincere humility, which are the two gates and foundations of a Christian life. Thou oughtest first of all to think of the multitude of thy past sins, specially those thou didst commit when thou hadst less knowledge of Almighty God; for if thou examine thyself well, thou wilt find that thy sins are more in number than the hairs of thy head, and that thou didst
B live

live as the heathen do, who know not GOD. Then thou mayest run briefly over the ten Commandments of GOD, and the seven deadly sins; and thou wilt see that there is not one of them of which thou hast not been guilty either in thought, word, or deed. By eating of only one forbidden fruit, our first parents sinned; but thou hast sinned many times and oft, in all thy members, and with all thy senses.

Consider, moreover, the Divine Blessings which have been heaped upon thee during thy past life, and see what use thou hast made of them. And as thou must needs hereafter give an account of them all, it will be well for thee to examine and judge thyself now, in order that thou be not judged of the LORD. Wherefore tell me, O Christian Soul, how didst thou pass thine infancy, thy childhood, thy youth, thy manhood, thine advancing and, it may be, thy declining years? In short, tell me how didst thou pass thy former life? How hast thou made use of thy bodily senses; and of the talents which Almighty GOD has given thee, in order that thou mightest know Him the more perfectly, and serve Him the more faithfully? How hast thou employed thine eyes? but in beholding vanity; thine ears? but in hearing falsehoods; thy tongue? but in evil talking, murmuring, and in the vanities of the world. How hast thou employed thy other senses—thy taste, thy touch, and thy sense of smell? but in unmortified pleasure and sensual gratification. How
haft

hast thou, again, approached unto the Blessed Sacraments, ordained by Almighty God for thy Soul's health? How hast thou, also, thanked Him for His Benefits? How hast thou listened to His holy Inspirations? How hast thou employed the health, the strength, the natural talents, the gifts of fortune, the opportunities which God has given thee to enable thee to live holily? How hast thou, once more, how hast thou behaved to thy neighbour, who has been committed to thy love; and how hast thou performed those Acts of Mercy which thou owest unto him?

What wilt thou answer on that dreadful day, when thy JUDGE shall say unto thee—*Give an account of thy stewardship*, and of the goods I have entrusted to thee, for I will that thou shouldest enjoy them no longer? O thou unfruitful branch, prepared for eternal fire, what wilt thou answer on that day, when the account of thy life, and of its every moment, shall be required of thee?

Secondly, think of the sins thou hast committed, aye, and dost yet commit, since thine eyes have been opened to a still more perfect knowledge of Almighty God. Thou wilt see that, notwithstanding that increased knowledge, much of the old Adam still remains within thee. For, if thou couldest discover how much thou dost daily sin, by sins of omission or commission, against thy God, thy neighbour, or thyself, thou wouldest well know, that in all good things thou art deeply

deeply wanting. Consider, for instance, how irreverent thou art, and lacking in devotion towards God ; how ungrateful for all His Benefits ; how rebellious to all His holy Inspirations, or at least how careless to obey them ; how slothful in His Service, for which, save in the eyes of the world, thou hast neither, as thou oughtest to have, zeal, nor diligence, nor even purity of intention. Think how uncharitable thou art towards thy neighbour ; how lenient towards thyself ; and how fond thou art of thine own will, thine own honour, thine own interests. See how proud, how ambitious thou art ; how full of angry feelings and vain glory ; and how malicious, and eaten up with envy. Think again, how over-careful thou art about thy food ; how sensual a lover of pleasure, and over much talking ; how changeable ; how inconstant in all good resolutions ; how inconsiderate in thy words ; how negligent in good works ; and how full of sloth in all matters of serious business.

Thirdly, after thou hast examined into the number of thy sins, thou must consider their heinousness, in order that thou mayest see how thy misery has encompassed thee in on every side. Thou must first consider these three things, concerning the sins of thy past life ; first, against Whom thou hast sinned ; secondly, why thou hast sinned ; and thirdly, after what manner thou hast sinned. If thou considerest against Whom thou hast sinned, thou wilt know that it was against Almighty God ;
Whose

Whose Goodness and Majesty is infinite ; Whose Bounties and Mercies towards mankind are more in number than the sand of the sea ; in Whom alone is found all Excellency ; and to Whom all the gratitude and obligations we owe to the creature are really due.

Next, consider why hast thou sinned ? For a point of honour ; for some pleasurable and sensual gratification ; for some paltry interest ; or for something equally frivolous. Of this the Prophet sadly laments—*I have been dishonoured in the presence of My people, for a handful of barley, and a piece of broken bread.*

Lastly, consider in what manner thou hast sinned. With such facility ; with such boldness ; without scruple ; without fear ; at times with positive pleasure, as if thou wast sinning against a GOD, Who neither sees, nor hears, nor knows what is going on in the world. Can this be the honour due to so great a Majesty ? Is this fit gratitude for such exceeding Benefits ? Is this repayment for that precious Blood, which was shed on Calvary ? or for the Agony, the Denial, the Scourging, or the Cross ? O heartless son of man. O wretched man, for what thou hast lost ; doubly wretched, for what thou hast committed ; and far more so, if thou feelest not thy lost estate. For, think of the infinite hatred with which thy Heavenly FATHER hates sin ; and forget not the everlasting punishment He cannot but inflict upon the ungodly and disobedient, that

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thou

thou mayest somewhat understand the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

Having considered these matters, thou must think of thyself, with as much humility as thou mayest. Thou must believe thyself to be no better than *a reed shaken with the wind*; with no steadfastness, without holiness, without strength, with no stability, with no manner of good. Think of thyself as a spiritual Lazarus, four days dead in earthly corruption, in the sight of man; hideous and loathsome in the Sight of Almighty God, and of the holy Angels. Conceive thyself—as in truth thou art—unworthy even to lift thine eyes to Heaven; unworthy that the earth should bear thee; unworthy of the bread thou eatest; unworthy of the very air thou dost inhale. And if thou art unworthy of these things, how much more unworthy art thou, to take upon thee to speak unto the ALMIGHTY, to receive the Consolation of His HOLY SPIRIT, to be treated as His adopted child?

Consider then, O my Soul, consider then thyself as one of the most miserable creatures in the world; that thou hast made the worst possible use of God's Gifts and Graces; and acknowledge, that if the LORD *had done in Tyre and Sidon the mighty works* that He has done in thee, *they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes*. Confess thyself to be much worse than thou canst even conceive; and thou wilt also discover, that the more closely thou dost examine into the iniquity

quity of thy sin-sick Soul, even when thou thinkest to reach the bottom, thou wilt only find thyself more deeply and painfully corrupt. Raise then aloud thy voice to GOD, and say unto Him —O LORD JESUS CHRIST, *I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.* Cast thyself, with the penitent sinner, at the feet of thy Loving LORD; humble thyself before the Great King of all the earth, against Whom thou hast rebelled so often, and so treacherously; and with much sorrow and deep penitence, implore His merciful Pardon for thy many shortcomings, and that He will be pleased, of His infinite Goodness, to receive thee once again into His Divine Favour.

Of the Consideration of our Sins.

The first plank to be seized upon, after the shipwreck of sin, says a Holy Man of old, is penitence. This is the first step by which thou canst ascend; and it is the very foundation stone of the spiritual life. To obtain this virtue, besides the Gift of thy Heavenly FATHER, Whose Gift is true penitence, it will be profitable for thee to consider the multitude of thy sins, as well present as past, and the exceeding greatness of them; as from this consideration only can proceed sincere repentance. And not only this virtue, but many much higher ones arise from the same source; namely, a perfect knowledge of oneself, a hearty con-

contempt of oneself, the godly fear of Almighty God, an abhorrence of sin, and other similar dispositions, in which consist a great part of spiritual perfection.

And that this exercise may be profitable to thee, thou must apply it unto these ends, endeavouring to draw out the sweetest of fruits—as thou wilt be enabled to draw them—from the bitter root of this consideration. In order that thou mayest obtain these fruits, Divine Grace, which is never, thank God, refused to the humble and devout, is very needful for thee. Entreat, therefore, thy Dear LORD, to grant thee this Grace of humility and devotion; so that possessing a knowledge of thy inmost heart, thou mayest follow the example of the repentant King, who said—*O LORD, I am oppressed, undertake for me; I shall go softly all my years, in the bitterness of my Soul.*

Of the Number of our Sins.

If thou desirest to know, O my Soul, how numberless are the sins of thy past life, think over on thy knees one by one, as thou hast been urged before, the ten Commandments of God, and the seven deadly sins; and thou wilt discover to thy shame and confusion of face, that there is not one Command thou hast not broken; not one sin thou hast not committed, either in thought, or word, or deed. And of these, consider at present but two instances. The first Commandment

mandment declares—*Thou shalt have none other Gods but Me*; and enjoins us to honour Almighty GOD, as the Only, Very, and True GOD. GOD, says a Saint, is honoured by the exercise of these three virtues—faith, hope, and charity. But what manner of faith, does he hold, who lives in this world as if he really thought that all which has been revealed by the HOLY GHOST were false? What Christian hope can he have, who remembers not the life to come, and who neither calls upon GOD in trouble, nor is anxious to do Him service? What charity, that deserves the name, does he possess, who loves his own pleasure more than his neighbour's good, and the wages of sin more than the sweet and easy Yoke of CHRIST? Think also of the last Command—*Thou shalt not covet*; and who can say he has not broken that? And here, in this case, who can answer for the extent of his covetousness? Who can say that his eyes have not become windows of perdition to him—and that, in many ways—to let in unto his Soul unruly desires, which, so far from being contented with what his Heavenly FATHER continually provides for him, certainly end in coveting the possessions of other men?

Examine after this manner, but far more searchingly, and one by one, the Divine Commandments; and then judge thyself, lest thou be judged of the LORD, how far removed thou art from sin? Consider thy pride of heart, how great it is? Thy desire for honour and praise, to what
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an extent it has reached. Thy self-esteem and depreciation of others, who can estimate them? What can be said of thy vain glory, or the levity of thy heart, since any trifle is sufficient to distract thee? What steps hast thou taken, what works hast thou done, what words hast thou spoken, which have not proceeded from a wrong intention, from vanity, and from the wish to be thought well of? Again, thy dress, thy table, thine acquaintance, thine actions, thy very courtesies and charities, are they not infected with vanity, or eaten up with pride? Examine also thy senses; and not only them, but consider also the Gifts and Graces which Almighty God has poured upon thee, and see what use thou hast made of them. Alas, thou wilt not fail to find, that all these aids which He hath given thee, whereby thou mightest have served Him better, thou hast turned into instruments to offend Him the more grievously. Herein hast thou wasted thy strength, thy means, thy life, thy intellect, thy memory, and many other of God's Blessings.

These, and other, and even worse sins hast thou committed in thy past life; for all of which thou mightest well say with the Kingly Penitent—*My sins have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up; yea, they are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart hath failed me.* And although there are so many things which might have restrained thee, and taught thee

thee to fear GOD, such as the number of His Benefits, His great Goodness, His infinite Mercy : yet in His Blessings, thou hast not recognised His Hand ; for His Goodness, thou hast not loved Him ; nor hast thou feared Him, notwithstanding His Justice. But forgetting and closing thine eyes to all these things, thou hast wilfully thrown thyself into all manner of wickedness. Had thy motives for, and inducements to sin been strong, thou mightest have found some excuse for thy many and grievous offences ; but what sayest thou of thyself, O my Soul ? Alas, GOD knoweth, thou must confess that thou hast sinned for things light as air, for childish trifles, for mere vanity, and as it seemed, simply to disobey the Commandments of thy GOD. Others, when they sin, are wont to have some fear and remorse of conscience, or at the least, to feel ill at ease after they have sinned. But thou, peradventure, hast been so blind, and so insensible, that thou hast committed thousands of sins without feeling the least compunction or fear. In a word, thou hast acted as if, verily, thou didst disbelieve in the very existence of a GOD ; or as if, believing there was One, thou believest after the manner of those who say—*Tush, the LORD shall not see ; neither shall the GOD of Jacob regard it.* This is indeed one of the most grievous evils in the world ; for amongst the seven things which the wise King says are abomination in the Sight of GOD, one is to have *feet that be swift in running*

running to mischief; that is, the recklessness with which the wicked sin before the ALMIGHTY.

Of some Means whereby Self-knowledge is attained.

It is certain that thou hast fallen into these and many other sins, before thou hadst arrived at a perfect knowledge of Almighty God ; but now, that knowledge having been attained, ask of Him to open thine eyes, and thou wilt find that much of the old Adam still remains within thee, that many Jebusites still abide in the Land of Promise, because thou hast been so well disposed towards them.

Consider then, how in everything thou art deficient, especially as regards the duties thou owest to thy God, thy neighbour, and thyself; how little hast thou profited in the service of thy CREATOR, during the long time He has called thee; how strong are thy passions; how little thou hast increased in holiness; how thou art ever the same faulty being, like a branchless tree which never flourishes; and perhaps, alas, thou hast rather gone back, since, in the way of the LORD, not to go forward is always to turn back. And in fervour and devotion of Spirit, is it well that thou art now removed farther from it than thou wert formerly?

Think of the careless sorrow thou hast shown for thy sins; the little love, fear, and hope, thou hast felt towards Almighty God. The coldness
of

of thy love, is shown forth in the little thou doest for Him ; thy slight fear, in the many faults thou dost commit ; and thy want of confidence in Him, shows itself in the hour of tribulation, by the stormy passions which trouble thee, and in the time of sorrow, from thy heart not being firmly stayed with the sure anchor of hope.

Again, consider how feebly thou hast responded to Divine Inspirations ; how rebellious thou hast been to the Decrees of Heaven ; how thou hast grieved the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, and suffered His many Calls in vain : for since thou wilt not mortify thine own will, thou canst not perform the holy Will of GOD. He calls thee one way ; thou goest another. He desires thee to perform some work for Him ; and thou straightway doest some other. Though thou seest clearly what is the Will of thy Heavenly FATHER, if thine own will is contrary to it, thou servest Him after that will, and not after the manner in which He would have thee to serve Him. Perhaps He calls thee to inward devotional exercises ; thou immediately hast recourse to outward ones. He calls thee to prayer ; thou dost immediately begin to read. He wills that thou shouldst attend to thine own Soul, before that of any other ; thou art forgetful of thyself, and settest aside thine own improvement for that of others ; from whence it comes to pass, that thou neither profitest thyself nor them.

Lastly, every time the Divine Will is contrary
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to

to thine, thine own is the conqueror, the Divine Will is the vanquished. Even supposing thou hast done some good work ; how great, how manifold were its defects ! Hast thou given thyself to prayer ; how many have been thy distractions, how often hast thou been wearied and slothful, without due reverence for the Divine Majesty of GOD, with Whom thou wert conversing ; and how dost thou long for the hour which shall end thy task ? If thou hast done other good works ; with what coldness are they performed, and how great are their faults. If it is certain that the ALMIGHTY beholds, not so much thy good deeds, as the spirit and intention with which they are done ; how many thinkest thou of these good works hast thou performed, which, purified from chaff and dust, were unstained by vanity and the world ? How many hast thou done unmoved by the importunity of others, or out of compliment to them ? How many for thine own honour and reputation ? How many to please men ? How many for thine own gratification ? Alas, thou wilt soon see, how small have been the number of those deeds which thou hast done simply for the sake of Almighty GOD, without taking any notice of the opinion of the world.

If thou dost examine into thy duty towards thy neighbour, thou wilt soon see, that thou hast neither loved him as GOD hath commanded thee ; nor felt that his sorrows were thine ; nor helped him

him in his distress ; nor shown sufficient compassion towards him. Rather, perhaps, instead of pitying him, thou hast vented thine anger upon him, and hast despised his distress ; not considering, that true justice is tempered with compassion, and false justice with contempt.

Again, touching that bond of love, which the Apostle recommends to us so often, commanding us to love one another, as Members of the same Body, since we are all partakers of the same SPIRIT ; how far hast thou been from fulfilling this command ? How often hast thou refused to succour the poor, to visit the sick, to help the widow, and to assist him who can do but little for himself ? How often hast thou scandalised others, by thy words, and thy actions ? How often hast thou preferred thyself before thine equals, despised thine inferiors, and flattered thy superiors ; being, as occasion offered, humble to some, and proud to others ?

If thou wilt examine thyself further, put thine hand into thy bosom, how leprous shalt thou pull it out again ; what deep wounds shalt thou find ; how full of the roots of pride, and of the love of honour, vain glory, and hypocrisy, with which thou concealest thy faults, so as to appear different to what thou really art ? What a lover of gain art thou. How fond of the pleasures of the flesh, for which oftentimes, under the colour of necessity, thou dost not only provide for, but serve ; not only dost sustain, but pamper ? Again,
if

if thine equal goes but a little way before thee, how speedily do signs of envy show themselves? If another does but touch thee in some point of honour, how quickly art thou angry.

But, besides all these evils, canst thou forget the carelessness of thy tongue, the levity of thine heart, the obstinacy of thy will, the instability of thy good resolutions? How many evil words proceed from thy lips; how vain and prejudicial are they to thy neighbour; how flattering to thyself? How seldom hast thou denied thine own will, and given over the prey whereon it feedeth, in order to fulfil the Almighty Will of God? Examine into it well, and thou wilt surely find how seldom it is that thou gainest a victory over thyself; whereas it is always needful for thee to have this power, to enable thee to live a holy life. What canst thou say of thy broken resolutions, but that thou art like a weathercock, which is turned about by every breath of wind, as thou art, on the least occasion which offers itself to thee? What is thy whole life, but a child's play, purposing something in the morning, and changing sometimes even in the self-same hour? What art thou like, but to the lunatic in the Holy Gospel, whom the Apostles of the LORD JESUS themselves could not heal?

Consider, again, the levity of thine heart, whose fickleness, changefulness, and cowardice, thou canst as little explain, as it is certain that thine heart changes almost hourly, without any stability
or

or firmness, into as many shapes and figures as occasions offer. How quickly is it distracted from business; how lightly it pours out all that it has; and how slight an adversity is enough to vex and overwhelm it, thou, O my Soul, very well knowest.

In conclusion, cast up thine account well, and see what thou hast, and what thou dost need. Thou wilt then know, that thou hast great reason to fear, since thou hast been but a mere appearance and shadow of holiness and goodness. For thou hast in thyself nothing more than a bare thought of Almighty God, which perhaps favours more of the flesh than of the Spirit. It might thus appear to thee that thou art safe; even thou mightest say with the Pharisee, that thou art not as other men are, because they possess not even the thought and feelings which thou hast; whereas the other portion of thy Soul is full of self-love, self-will, and many other defects and passions. So that all the substance of this show of holiness is but to say—**LORD, LORD**, and not to do the holy Will of **GOD**. This is to imitate the hypocritical Pharisee, and to be that lukewarm one of whom the **ALMIGHTY** emphatically says in the Book of Revelation—*I will spue thee out of My Mouth*.

All these things thou must consider very diligently, and endeavour to obtain sincere sorrow and penitence for thy past sins, and a perfect knowledge of thyself; that by the one thou

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mayest

mayest ask pardon for having offended thy Dear LORD, and by the other, thou mayest obtain Grace never so to offend Him thus again for ever.

Of the Contempt a Man should feel for himself.

After a man has thus considered the number of his sins, by which he is weighed down, he ought to humble himself as much as possible, and to desire the just contempt of all creatures, since he has despised the CREATOR of them all. And in this matter, the devout Considerations of a Holy Saint will be of help to him, who, in speaking of this compunction of conscience, says—Behold, brethren, our great vileness, and the enormity of our sins; let us therefore humble ourselves before Almighty GOD as much as we can. Let us be afraid to lift up so much as our eyes unto Heaven; let us smite our breasts like the publican in the Gospel, that the LORD may have mercy upon us; and let us constrain ourselves, and take up arms against our own wickedness, and enter into judgment with ourselves. Let each one say within himself—If for these sins, which I have committed, my SAVIOUR was so insulted and afflicted, why should I not abase myself, seeing that it was for me that He suffered? Far be it from me ever to presume upon myself. For I am he, who has despised Almighty GOD, and who has crucified Him afresh upon the Cross. It seems, indeed, as if the whole world gave sentence against me, saying—This is he, who has despised our
common

common LORD. This is that ungrateful and perverse one, who has been moved more by the wiles of the Devil, than by the benefits of the ALMIGHTY. This is he, to whom the malice of the Devil is more agreeable than the Divine Goodness. This is he, who could never be attracted by Divine Love, nor intimidated by Divine Wrath. This is he, who has dishonoured and scoffed at the Power, the Wisdom, the Goodness of GOD ; who fears more to offend a mortal like himself, than the Omnipotent GOD ; and who is more ashamed of committing a wicked action before men, than in the Presence of GOD. This is he, again, who enjoys earthly pleasures more than his Chiefest Good. This is he, who fixes his eyes on corruptible creatures, and has turned from the service of his CREATOR. And what shall I say more ? There is nothing vile and wicked which he has not committed in the Presence of GOD, without shame or respect for so great a Majesty.

Wherefore let all creatures cry out against him, saying—This is he, who has treated us so badly, for he ought to have employed us in the service and praise of our CREATOR ; who has made us serve the Enemy of Souls, turning into reproach the Holy ONE, Who created us to serve Himself alone. His Soul was beautified with the Image of GOD ; he has darkened that Image, and clothed it with our vile likeness. More earthly was he than earth ; more unstable than
water ;

water ; more changeful than the wind ; more ardent than fire in his fleshly appetites ; more hardened than stone ; more cruel against himself than his enemies ; more uncharitable against others than the Evil One himself. He has neither feared God, nor regarded man ; he has scattered his wickedness amongst men, attracting many others to be the companions of his evil deeds ; and not content with injuring God Himself, he has induced others to be partakers in his injuries.

And what can I say of his other offences ? His pride is so great that he will neither be subject to Almighty God, nor bend his neck beneath the yoke of His Obedience ; but lives as he himself thinks best, having in all things his own will, and being utterly rebellious against the Will of God. If God grants not his desires, or sends him any trouble, he is as wrathful with the CREATOR, as he would be to a creature. In all his actions he desires to be praised, as well in bad as in good ones ; as if he were that DEITY to Whom alone it is due to be praised for everything, since all He does is Good, and is ordained for Good. He is, after a manner, more proud than Lucifer, and more presumptuous than Adam ; for they, being filled with light and beauty, had some reason to presume of themselves ; but a sinful man, what reason has he in the least degree to esteem himself ?

All creatures most justly raise their voices
against

against me, for I, O my Soul, I am the man. They exclaim—Come, and destroy this despiser of our CREATOR. The earth says—Why do I sustain him? The water—Why do I not cover him? The air—Why do I give him breath? The fire—Why do I not consume him? And Hell says—Why do I not swallow him up, and torment him? Alas, wretched man that I am, what shall I do, whither shall I fly, since everything is in arms against me? Who will receive me, since I have offended all things? Almighty GOD have I despised; the holy Angels have I grieved; the Saints have I dishonoured; men have I offended; all creatures have I treated badly. Why need I make so long a discourse, for in offending the CREATOR, I have also offended all His creatures in Him. I know not whither to flee. Everything is against me. I can see no one to take my part; my own conscience raises its voice against me; and my very reins chasten me in the night season.

Wherefore, O my Soul, I will weep, as some poor wretched creature weeps, with unceasing tears of penitence, whilst I live in this vale of misery, hoping that my most Merciful SAVIOUR will vouchsafe to turn His pitying Look towards me. I will cast myself at His sacred Feet, and with all possible humility and shame I will say to Him—LORD JESU, I am that great enemy of Thine, who, before Thy Divine Eyes, has committed such abominable sins. I acknowledge
myself

myself so guilty before Thee, that were I to suffer those pains of Hell, which evil spirits and men have been condemned to suffer, I could make no sufficient atonement for my sins. Extend then, O Merciful LORD, the cloak of Thy Mercy over Thy miserable creature, that my wickedness may be overshadowed by the greatness of Thy Love. Let the Heavenly FATHER rejoice at the return of the prodigal son; and the Good SHEPHERD, at the recovery of the sheep which was lost. Oh, how joyful will be that day, when Thou shalt extend Thine everlasting Arms to me, and give me the Kifs of Peace. To obtain this Blessing, I well know what to do. I will take up arms against myself, and will be more severe towards myself than towards any other; I will afflict myself in all manner of ways; I will despise myself; I will rejoice in being dis-esteemed, from whatever side dishonour comes; I will even be glad when my shame is discovered and published. And because I alone am not enough to despise myself; I will join with all GOD's creatures, and will desire to be despised and afflicted by them, since I have despised their Great CREATOR. It will be a much longed-for treasure for me to heap up pain and contempt upon myself; and I will sincerely love all those that will help me. Whilst all the consolations and honours of this life shall be to me as torments; and I will count them all as poison and death itself.

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If I do this, I firmly believe that, though I have offended them, I shall induce all created things to have pity upon me ; and that all those who formerly gave their voice against me, will now pray and entreat for me, after their manner. Insults and dishonour may come upon me from every side, and are welcome, if only they bring me nearer unto my Dearest LORD. May all honour and pleasure be far from me ; the name of them even shall not be heard in my dwelling ; but in all things I will seek the Honour of my LORD, and mine own despite and confusion of face.

Such are the words of a Holy Saint of old, which will be helpful to those who devoutly meditate upon them, and which will excite in them these four great affections—sorrow for sin, godly fear of Almighty God, hatred of oneself, and the wish to be little esteemed for the sake of GOD. From the first affection proceeds penitence, which will cleanse us from our past sins. In the second is found the Love of GOD, which excludes all other love. From the third is obtained a hatred of self. And with the fourth comes true humility, against the glories and desires of the world.

Whoever is anxious to obtain these four virtues, must exercise himself in these and in similar considerations. By them is specially obtained that hatred of self, which not only eschews all pleasures of the flesh, and procures for itself mortifica-

mortifications ; but much more, that which enables us to despise all the dignities and honours of the world, and to love to be disesteemed for the sake of GOD. This affection belongs properly to humility, which is a hearty contempt of self ; from whence is derived a true knowledge of ourselves and of our sins. And, in conclusion, I would only add this, in order that the lovers of true humility may be encouraged, that from the same fountain, whence is drawn water to obtain abhorrence of ourselves, proceeds also nourishment to sustain the tree of true humility, from which springs all virtue and holiness of life.

**Second**



Second Consideration.

OF THE ORIGIN AND MISERIES OF HUMAN LIFE.

Of the Origin and Miseries of Human Life :

*Of the Origin and Birth of Man : Of the
Miseries of Life : Of the Shortness of Life :
Of the Uncertainty of Life : Of the Frailty
of Life : Of the Changefulness of Life : Of
the Deceitfulness of Life : Of the Sorrows
of Life.*

Of the Origin and Miseries of Human Life.

NEXT thou must consider the origin and miseries of human life, that they may enable thee to see how vain is the glory of the world ; and that, seeing on how weak a foundation it is built, thou mayest know in how little esteem a man ought to hold himself, since he is sprung from such an origin, and is subject to so many miseries.

To attain this object, thou must first consider the vileness of the origin and birth of man, and of what he is composed ; the manner of his conception ; the sorrow and pain of his
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birth ; and the frailty and wretchedness of his body ; according as they shall be spoken of hereafter.

Then thou must consider the miseries of the life he leads, and especially these seven following ; First, the shortness of this life, the greatest length of which is but threescore years and ten. For the rest, if any years remain, they are, as the Psalmist says, *but labour and sorrow*. But if thou takest from this term, the period of infancy, which is more like the life of an animal, than that of a man, and of which, since children have but little use of their reason, much is wasted in sleep, thou shalt find that thy life is much shorter than thou dost imagine it to be. And if above all, thou dost compare it with the Eternity of the Life to come, it will hardly appear to thee to be a single moment. From this thou mayest see, how insane are they, who, in order that they may enjoy, as they think, this short breath of life, risk the loss of that repose which will last for ever.

Secondly ; consider—which is another misery besides the former one—how uncertain is this life, for not only is it short, but even that short continuance is very doubtful. For how many, I pray thee, attain to these threescore years and ten ? In how many lives is the thread cut off, when it has hardly begun to be woven ? How many pass away in the flower of their age ; for as our Blessed LORD saith—*Ye know not when the MASTER of the House cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at*

at the cockcrowing, or in the morning? We know not if He will come in the time of childhood, of infancy, of youth, or of old age. And in order that thou mayest be the better assured of this, remember the death of many persons thou hast known in this world, especially of thy friends, and relations, or of many eminent persons, whom death has seized upon at different ages, little regarding their hopes and desires. I know a certain man who keeps a memorial of those he has known in the world, in all estates of life, who are now dead; sometimes he passes them in review in his memory, and briefly rehearsets the tragedy of their lives, the deceits and disappointments of the world, and the end of all earthly things. By this we may understand, with what good reason the Apostle saith—*The fashion of this world passeth away*; whereby he shows us, of how little value are the things of this world, since he calls them, not true things, but only figures of the true, which have no being, whereby they are only the more deceitful.

Thirdly; think how fragile and tender is life. Thou wilt find that there is no glassen vessel more delicate, than is our life; since a breath of air, a stroke of the sun, a draught of cold water, a few moments' sickness, is enough to deprive us of it, as is shown us by daily experience; since many persons lose their lives, by one or other of such like occurrences, aye, and that in the flower of their age.

Fourthly;

Fourthly ; consider how changeful is life ; and how it never continues the same. Think also of the many changes and alterations in our bodies, which never remain in the same state. Consider also, again, how much greater is the mutability of our minds, which, like the sea, are moved and tossed about by every wind and wave of passion, which disquiet us every hour. And, lastly, consider how great is the change in one who is subject to the fickleness of fortune, which as a wheel is always moving. Above all things, consider how ceaseless is the course of our life, since it never rests day nor night ; but goes on its way consuming itself, as doth a garment, with long use, and each hour drawing nearer and nearer to its end.

Following these thoughts, let me ask you what is life ? A candle, which is always wasting away, consuming the most quickly when it shines the most brightly. Or a flower, which blooms in the morning, fades at noon, and withers in the evening. This is the comparison of the Psalmist, who says—*In the morning it is green, and groweth up ; but in the evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered.*

Fifthly ; consider, and this is perhaps its worst feature, how deceitful is life, since it deceives us in this way ; being deformed and ugly, it seems to us beautiful ; being short, it appears long ; being wretched, it seems to us so happy, that there is no danger, trouble, nor loss men will not
undergo

undergo to preserve it, even in things by which they may lose Life eternal.

Sixthly ; consider, besides the shortness of our life, to how many troubles and miseries it is subject, as well of mind, as of body ; and that in all things it is but a vale of tears, and a sea of endless misery. A Holy Man tells us, that Xerxes, on one occasion, went up upon a high mountain, to behold from thence his army, composed of a vast number of people. After he had seen it, he began to weep ; and on being asked why he wept, he said—I weep because in an hundred years hence, none of those who are now before us will be alive. Upon which the Saint said—Oh, if we could ourselves stand on such an eminence, that from thence we might see all the world at our feet, then alas should we see the weakness and misery of it ; people destroyed by people, and kingdoms by kingdoms ; some tormented, others taken captive ; some murdered, others drowned ; marriages here, weeping there ; births in one place, deaths in another ; some abounding in riches, others struggling in want. In a word, we should see, not only the army of Xerxes, but the whole race of mankind, who, living now, shall in a few days have passed away for ever.

Consider then the sorrow and weakness to which our body is liable by the many afflictions of the Spirit, and by the dangers which abound in every estate of life, and thou shalt see, how great are the miseries of this life ; so that by seeing how

little the world can give, thou shalt the more easily learn how to despise it.

To all these miseries succeeds the last, which is that of death ; which both to body and Soul, is the most terrible of all, since at one blow the body is deprived of everything ; and then is determined, in what state of existence the Soul shall remain for ever.

Let us then consider these chief miseries of human life more at large. And truly how great the miseries are, into which the Soul, by reason of sin, falls, no tongue can tell. Well did a Saint of old say, that our first Parents only, who knew by experience in what a noble condition Almighty God had created them, understood perfectly the miseries of man ; because they, remembering the happiness of the life in which they had lived, saw the more clearly the miseries of this foreign land, wherein through their own sin they were forced to dwell. But their children, not knowing what real happiness is, and being born in sin, know not fully what misery is ; seeing that they know not what true prosperity is. Indeed many of them are as it were mad ; since they would, if possible, continue in this life, and make this place of banishment their country, and this prison their dwelling-place, because they understand not its miseries. Wherefore like those who from continually dwelling in an unhealthy atmosphere, are not annoyed by it, from being accustomed to it ;
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so these unhappy ones feel not the miseries of their life, because they are used to them.

Of the Origin and Birth of Man.

That thou mayest not fall into these deceits, nor into the greater ones which follow them; consider attentively the origin and birth of man, and the life he leads on earth. To begin at the beginning, let us first consider of what the body of man is composed; for by the greatness, or baseness of it, is the work oftentimes known. Holy Scripture says, that Almighty God created man from the dust of the earth. Now, of all the elements, earth is the most elemental, and of the earth, dust is the lowest part; therefore it appears that man was created out of the basest matter, and that all men, however noble they may be, are but dust. And if such be the material of which we are composed, of what is it that we are so proud? Besides, the manner in which this edifice is raised up, cannot be written, but must be passed over in silence. If men knew how to be ashamed, nothing could shame them more than the manner in which they are conceived. This thing only will I say, that when our most Merciful SAVIOUR came on earth, to take upon Himself our sorrows, that He might relieve us of them, this thing only He would in no wise take upon Himself, not disdaining to be spitted upon and buffeted, and even to be reckoned amongst trans-

transgressors ; for the only thing He thought unworthy of His Divine Majesty was, to be conceived after the manner of men.

Let us then consider the birth of man. What more pitiful thing is there, than to see a woman in travail ? What pain she suffers ; what danger she is in ; and when her child is born, he is weeping, poor, naked, and miserable ; wanting everything, and unable to do anything for himself. Animals are born with some sort of covering ; some with wool, some with scales, some with feathers ; others with thick skin, and others with shells. But man alone is born without any covering, except a thin and delicate skin ; and thus he creeps into a world, in which, after he is full-grown, he is so proud that scarcely anything will contain him. Besides all this, animals at their birth know how to seek for what they need ; some walk, some swim, some fly ; and, without being taught, they know how to obtain the necessaries they want. Man alone can neither walk, nor do anything for himself, but must be carried in the arms of others. How long is it before he can speak. How long is he in learning to walk. And not only this, but how long is he in learning to feed himself. One thing only can he do ; and that is to weep. This is what he does first, and the only thing he can do without being taught ; and though he can also laugh, yet this he cannot do till long after his birth. But he always weeps ; from which may be understood that tears are more natural
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to man than joy. Oh, what folly, then, says a wise Man, of men, who, from so small a beginning, persuade themselves that they are born to be so proud.

Then the body of man, which is so highly prized by him, let us see what it really is, though it appears so beautiful to us. Tell me, what else is the body of man, but a poisonous vessel, which corrupts all that is put into it? What else is it, but mire covered over with snow, the outside of which is clean, while inside it is full of impurity? It is recorded of a great Philosopher, that he was so ashamed of the condition of his body, that he would not willingly hear the nobleness of his descent talked about, and no one could ever make him consent to have his portrait taken; for he said that it was enough misery for him to bear a thing so vile, and so unworthy of his Soul, without being obliged to leave a perpetual remembrance of it behind him. And of a Holy Man it is said, that once, at dinner, he was unable to restrain his tears; and on being asked why he wept, he said—I weep, because I am ashamed to eat this corruptible food of beasts, seeing that I was created to be in company with Angels, and to feed with them on Divine Food.

We will now consider more at length the miseries of this life; and principally these seven chief miseries. It is needful for us then to know
(j) how short is life, (ij) then how uncertain it is,
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(iij) next how fragile, (iv) after that how change-ful it becomes, (v) then how deceitful it is, (vj) sixthly, how miserable it is, and then (vij) we must think upon death, which is the end of all things.

Of the Shortness of Life.

Consider first, the shortness of life, as did Job, when he said—*Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee; Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.* How long are the threescore years and ten of life thought now? And yet it is only the common length of the life of man; and those who attain to it think that they have not been badly dealt with, as the Holy Psalmist said—*that though men be so strong that they come to fourscore years, yet is their strength then but labour and sorrow.*

Now, if thou wilt divide this life into different parts, and not reckon it altogether, it appears to me that thou canst not take into account the time of infancy, which for the most part is spent in sleep. The life of infancy, when we have attained to the use of reason, which alone makes us men, can hardly be called a life of man; since, in that age, we neither learn, nor do anything worthy of a man. Again, the time consumed in sleep cannot be called life; for the principal part of our life is, to have the use of our senses, and reason; and in sleep all things are suspended, and we are as it were dead. For this
reason

reason a Philosopher said, that during a large part of life there is no difference between the happy and the miserable ; since during sleep all are alike, and for the time being, are as it were dead. It is clear that if a King was taken prisoner for a year or two, one could not say that during that time he reigned, as he neither governed, nor enjoyed his Kingdom. How then can it be said that a man lives, whilst he is asleep ; since the senses and reason, by which he lives, are then suspended ? A certain Poet called sleep the cousin-german of death ; and another called it, the brother of death, on account of the likeness between the two.

Since so much of our life is passed in sleep, how great will be the portion of our being in which we do not live at all. If it is usual to sleep eight hours, or the third part of a day, though there be many who are not content with this, it follows from this, that a third part of our life is passed in sleep, and consequently in not living. By this thou mayest see, how great a portion of our brief life is passed each day in sleep. After having made this account, how much does there remain of life ? Certainly that Philosopher did right, who, on being asked what the life of man appeared to him to be, turned away from those who asked him, and left the place ; giving them to understand that this was like what our life was. It is no more than the course of a meteor, which in an instant flashes quickly

quickly away, and the sign even, which is left behind, vanisheth soon after; for, within a few days after the life of man is departed, he is no more held in remembrance. Finally, it appeared so short to many wise men in ancient days, that one of them was wont to call it a dream; and another not content with this, called it the dream of a shadow; it seemed to him that he might well call it so, as, in his opinion, it was no more than a dream of vanity.

Besides, how little remains of this life, if we compare it with the Life that is to come? how small will it then appear? The Wise Man says that—*The number of a man's days at the most are an hundred years.* What indeed is this, in comparison with Eternity, but as a drop of water compared with the sea? And this is clearly reasonable, for if a star compared with the rest of the heavens appears to be but little, what will this present life appear which is so short, with that endless Life which is to come? And if, as astronomers tell us, the earth itself compared with other heavenly bodies, though the greatest of them appears so small to us, is as a little spot, what will this short breath of life appear, compared with Eternity which is so infinite? Undoubtedly it will seem as nothing; for if a thousand years are before Almighty God, but one day; what will a hundred years be in His Sight—but nothing? Thus will it seem to those unfortunate ones, who will one day compare the
life

life they have left, and the Eternity of the torments which they have to suffer, as they themselves confess in these words—*What hath pride profited us? or what good hath riches with our vauntings brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow, and as a post that hasteth by; and as a ship that passeth over the waves of the water, which when it is gone by, the trace thereof cannot be found, neither the pathway of the keel in the waves; or as when a bird hath flown through the air, there is no token of her way to be found, but the light air being beaten with the stroke of her wings, and parted with the violent noise, and motion of them, is passed through, and therein afterwards no sign where she went is to be found; or like as when an arrow is shot at a mark, it parteth the air, which immediately cometh together again, so that a man cannot know where it went through: even so we, in like manner, as soon as we were born, began to draw to our end, and had no sign of Virtue to show; but were consumed in our own wickedness.*

How short will this life then appear to those wretched ones, seeing that they will confess that they lived not at all; since, at the same moment in which they were born, they began to fade away. And if this be so, what greater folly can there be, than to attempt to enjoy this dream of vain delights for a moment, and to suffer eternal torments? If the term of this life is so short, and of the next, so long; what folly it is to provide for so many things during so short a life, and

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not to lay up anything for the life which will be so long? What great folly it would be for a man determined to live in one country, to spend and consume all he had in buying goods, and building houses in another, and not to provide anything in the land wherein he means to dwell. How much more foolish are they, who spend all that they have in provision for this life, where they are to remain for so short a time; and who in nowise prepare for that Life, in which they will abide for ever; more especially considering that they have such good means for transporting their goods thither, by the hands of the poor, as says the Wise Man—*Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days.*

Of the uncertainty of life.

Although our life is so short, yet if we were certain of its length, as was King Hezekiah, to whom God had granted fifteen years more of life, our misery would not then be so great. But it is not so; for besides the shortness of our life, the term of it is also doubtful, as the Wise Man said—*Man knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.* Wise indeed is the sentence—That nothing is so certain as death; nothing so uncertain as the hour of it. Therefore does a philosopher well compare the life of a man to the circles and bubbles
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of water when it rains ; some of which disappear at once ; others of which last a little longer, and then suddenly die away ; others, last longer still ; whilst others last less time ; so that though they all last but a short time, in that time there is a great variety.

If the end of our life be so uncertain, and also the day when we are to be judged, how can we live so negligently, why do we not reflect upon the Words of our Blessed LORD—*Watch therefore ; for ye know not what hour your LORD doth come ;* as if He had said distinctly—Though thou knowest not the hour, watch in every hour ; though thou knowest not the month, watch every month ; though thou knowest not the year, be prepared in every year ; for though thou dost not know the year in which He will call thee, yet thou mayest be certain that in one of them He will call thee ? That the force of this reasoning may be more clear to thee, let us take an example. Tell me then, if thou wast to see thirty or forty dishes before thee, and wast assured that one of them contained poison, wouldst thou venture to eat any one of them, even though hunger tempted thee ? Certainly not. The fear of eating the poisonous one would make thee abstain from all the others.

Now let us see how many years, at the most, thou hast to live. We will say thirty or forty. Well ; since it is certain that thou wilt have to die in one of them, thou knowest not in which,
why

why fearest thou not to die in each one of them, as thou art sure thou must die in one of them? Thou wouldest not dare to touch any of these forty dishes, even wert thou to suffer hunger, because thou knowest that death is contained in one of them; yet thou art not afraid to die in these forty years, though thou art convinced that in one of them death will overtake thee. Who can answer again to this reasoning?

Listen again to another argument no less conclusive. Why is there always a sentinel watching in the frontier Castle? In order that he may give warning, thou wilt reply, when the enemy is about to assail it. Although the time of the foe's approach is unknown, yet watch and ward is continually kept; for if they knew the time of his coming, they might grow careless, and delay the diligence of their watch till then. Now I beseech thee, for the Love of God, to judge well what I am about to say to thee: If thou art doubtful as to when the enemy shall assail thy Castle, if thou keep guard in it continually, how is it that thou dost not ever watch over thy Soul, since thou knowest not when thy hour shall come? The same uncertainty, from which they in the Castle suffer, hast thou, and more also; for the importance is undoubtedly greater; what judgment then, thinkest thou, have they who are so busy watching, that they sleep always? What can be more against reason? Thy Soul is of infinitely more value than all the Castles and Kingdoms

Kingdoms in the world; and if thou dost consider the Price with which it was bought, it is of more value than even the Angels in Heaven. Consider also, that thou hast greater enemies who seek to overcome thee day and night; and that thou knowest not when they will assail thee. Consider that the whole welfare of thy Soul consists in thy being prepared, or in being unprepared in that hour; for according to the Holy Gospel, the Virgins *that were ready, went in with Him to the Marriage, and the door was shut.* Why shouldst thou not always watch, since doubt is always great; the danger is always great; the cause is great; and the Reward, without comparison, is greater still?

Of the Frailty of Life.

Not only is our life uncertain, it is also very fragile. What glass is so delicate and brittle as the life of man? A breath of air, an evening dew, a burning sun, is often enough to deprive us of it. But why do I say a hot sun? The glance of the eye, the beholding of a person has sometimes been enough to kill a man; no need to draw the sword, no need of arms; a single look has sometimes been enough. Consider how secure should that Castle be, in which the treasure of our life is kept, since one look, and that perhaps from afar off, is enough to beat it to the ground. But this is not surprising in the time of

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infancy,

infancy, when the edifice is still unfinished and incomplete. It is more to be wondered at, that after the completion of the work many years, a much slighter cause will destroy it. If thou dost ever ask, how this or that man died, thou wilt perhaps be told, that it was caused by a glass of cold water he drank; or by too much supper he ate; or by some pleasure, or some sorrow; whilst sometimes men can give no reason at all, but that he went to bed safely at night, and in the morning he was found dead. Is there any glassen vessel more brittle than this? Is it rather at all to be wondered at, that man is so fragile, considering that he is made of earth? The only wonder is that he lasts so long as he does. Why is a clock so often out of order? The reason is, that it has so many wheels, and works, and though made of hard metal, the least accident puts it out of order. Now think how much more delicate is the workmanship of our natural bodies; and how much more fragile is the material of our flesh; so how can we wonder, if among so many wheels, one of them is out of order; by reason of which the course of our life is stopped? Truly it is a matter of wonder, not that men perish so soon, but that they last so long as they do, seeing of what delicate materials they are composed.

Of this miserable frailty the Prophet Isaiah speaks—*The Voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field, the grass withereth,*

withereth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of our GOD shall stand for ever. A Saint speaking of the same subject, says—How true is this, thus flourisheth the greatness of man, which though to all appearance it is great, yet it is as little as the herb; it buddeth like a flower, and fadeth like grass, so that it only seems to flourish, but has no stability, nor firmness in its fruit. Why, what stability can there be in the matter of flesh; what lasting good can be found in so perishable a material. To-day thou seest a young man in the flower of his age, endowed with health and strength, and appearing full of health; the same night an illness comes upon him, and the next day he is so changed, that what was pleasant to behold, has now become wretched to look upon.

Besides all this, what sayest thou of the accidents and changes of our body? One is weakened by hard work; another grows poor; others are tormented by sickness; others are debilitated by old age; others make themselves ill through riotous living. Now, according to this, is it not true, that they wither like grass, and fade as a flower? Thou shalt see one of noble birth, and ancient descent, surrounded by friends, accompanied by followers, and influencing the neighbouring country. If there comes but a change in his fortunes, he is immediately abandoned by his friends, ill-treated by his equals, little esteemed by all. Thou shalt see another full of riches,
reported

reported to be courteous, liberal, ennobled with honour, exalted with power, dispensing judgment, and welcomed by all. Voices and murmurs arise in the city, and things change so much, that he is cast into the same prison wherein he formerly imprisoned others. To how many does it happen, that one day they are brought home with the pomp of the world, and the next night is sufficient to deprive them of greatness. Even a single bitter sorrow is enough to overthrow this delicate composition—man.

How deceitful, says a wise man, are the hopes of man; how fragile is our fortune; how vain our contentions, and strifes, which very often, so to speak, stop in the middle of the road and break down before they come in sight of Heaven. More than folly is it of the sons of Adam, who upon such a weak foundation build high towers, not seeing that they are raised upon sand, and the foundations are overthrown by the first wind that blows. Oh, into how many misfortunes do men fall, from not having examined their own consciences, and entered into judgment with themselves. If this is great blindness, how much more is it of those unhappy ones who have lived in sin for many years, and who know that between them and Hell, nothing but this uncertain life intervenes. Let us imagine a man hanging by a single cord, with a deep well beneath him, so that if the cord were to break he would certainly fall into the well; tell me in what state he would

would be in ; how frightened would he be ; how disturbed would he be ; how much preparation would he need, before risking so much danger ? And thou wretched one, who hast dared to fight against the Laws of Almighty God for so many years, and hast continued so long in sin, how is it that thou seest not thyself to be in the same danger ? In breaking this fragile thread of life thou wouldst inevitably fall into the deepest Hell. How then canst thou sleep ; how canst thou take thine ease ; how dost thou not try to avoid so great a danger ?

On the Changefulness of Life.

Our life suffers from another defect, namely, that of being very changeable, and of never remaining in the same state of being ; as Holy Job says, when in these words he deplores the miseries of life—*Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble ; he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down ; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.*

But passing over all other miseries, what thing is more changeful than man. It is said that in an hour the chameleon changes into many different colours ; the sea is proverbial for its many changes ; the moon changes its shape every day. But what are all these compared with the mutability of man ? What thing ever changes so much as man changes in every hour ? Now
sick,

sick, now well; now contented, now discontented; now sad, now joyful; now timorous, now confiding; now peaceful, now full of wrath; now he wills, now he wills not; and oftentimes he understands not even himself. In fine, as often as accidents befall him, so often he changes; each one after its kind torments him; the past gives him pain, the present troubles him, the future vexes him. If he has not wealth, he lives in distress; if he has it, he lives in pride; if he loses it, he lives in sorrow. Now what created thing is subject to so many changes? Even the ever changeful sea only changes when it is moved by the wind; but the life of man, either when agitated, or when calm, is ever subject to storms and changes.

Again, what sayest thou of the continued movement of our lives, what moment is there in which we do not approach towards death? What is the motion of the Heavens, but a wheel which is continually rolling up our lives towards their end? See how wool is woven in a wheel; first a portion is wound off, then a little more, then a little more, and so on, till the whole is wound. In the same way are our lives rolled up by the wheel of Heaven; since at each revolution it makes, a portion of our lives is wound up. For this reason did the Patriarch Job say, that *his days were more swift than a post*; for to him that runs in a post, whatever message he carries, any slight accident causes delay; but our life has no delay,
not

not even the grace of an hour. A Saint of old says—Whatever I write, whatever I read over again and correct, takes away some portion of my life ; and as many stops or points as the writer makes, so many are the losses and diminutions of my life. As persons in a ship, who, whether they stand, or sit, or walk about, are continually sailing, and approaching the end of their voyage ; like them, we too are ever moving towards the end of our journey, and the common haven of death. If our life is nothing but a continual movement towards death, and if the hour of death is also the hour of Judgment, what then is life, but a constant drawing nigh unto the awful Tribunal of GOD, and approaching nearer and nearer to His Judgment Seat ? What greater madness can there be, for us who are actually on the road to be judged, than to draw near unprepared, having offended Him Who is to judge us, by provoking still more His Anger against us ? Open thine eyes, wretched one, and consider the road thou takest, and whither thou art going ; and be ashamed, or rather take compassion on thyself, and consider how the evil thou doest, agrees with that thou art going to do.

Of the deceitfulness of life.

I could well bear with the evils of this life, were it not for another, which in my opinion is still greater—I mean the deceitfulness of life,
which

which always seems different to what it really is. For, as it is said, feigned holiness is a double sin ; so, a deceitful happiness is a double misery. Wherefore if this life appeared to us, as it really is, without the least deception, it is certain that we should not lose ourselves for it, or trust at all to it ; and we should always live prepared against it. But alas, it is so full of hypocrisy and deceit and fraud, that when it is most hideous, it appears to us most beautiful ; and being short, appears long to us ; and though it changes every hour, it bears an appearance as if it were always the same. Knowest thou, says an ancient Father, when thou wert a child, a youth, a man, aye, even an aged man, every day thou diest, every day thou dost change ; yet, with all this, we think that we are eternal. Upon this hope the magnificent buildings of a certain ancient City were built ; of which a philosopher once said—That the inhabitants built them as if they always intended to live ; and that they lived in them as if they daily intended to die.

From whence comes such forgetfulness of God ; such avarice ; such desire ; such vanity ; such carefulness in heaping up riches ; such negligence in preparing for death. Since we believe our lives will be long, this false imagination makes us also believe that we shall have time for all we desire, for the world, for sins, and for many other vain things ; and that besides this, we shall have time to make our peace before we die with Almighty

mighty GOD. Like as we make our measurement of a piece of cloth lying upon a table, appointing this piece for one purpose, and that for another ; so do we take account of our lives, as if we had the government of time, and the duration of our life, in our own hands. This deceitfulness proceeds from that silent persuasion and belief, which a man possesses within himself, and which only comes from self-love, which as it hates death, will have no remembrance of it, nor be persuaded that it will come into his house as soon as into any other man's. From this comes the belief, that others may die very soon ; because as he loves not them, as much as he loves himself, the knowledge of that truth is not bitter to him. But touching himself, the account is very different ; for as he loves himself much, he cannot bear the pain such a reflection causes him. Oftentimes these people deceive themselves, and their dreams prove to be contrary to what befalls them ; for oftentimes others, of whose life they had little hope, live longer than they fancied ; and they who thought they should live the longest, depart first out of this world. So that it fareth with them, as with young travellers, who in failing away from the land, imagine that the houses are going away from them, instead of which, they are leaving the harbour.

Of the Sorrows of Life.

But though this life had all the many miseries, we imagine, yet if the term of life were life indeed, there would be some consolation ; but what exceeds all other miseries is, that life is subject to so many misfortunes and sorrows, as well of mind as of body, that it may be more properly called death than life. Wherefore according to the poet—Not to live, but to pass through life well, is to live ; though in everything is life strait and short, it is only rich and wide in misery and sorrow. Undoubtedly life is but short ; to enjoy it is short ; and to obtain wisdom is short. In one thing only is it found long, and that is in suffering. Oh, dangerous state ; the less time thou art in passing through it, the more dangerous is the passage. Certainly had we eyes to observe ourselves, we should be always lamenting our state, as men condemned by the justice of God, to suffer such great evils. Although we were miserable on every side before, this misery seems to overpower the rest ; so that we, like madmen, live in a miserable case, not feeling our own wretchedness. Two great philosophers, though unbelievers, felt this, even more than we do. Of the one it is said, that he was always weeping, whilst the other was always laughing ; and both because they saw that our life was but vanity and misery.

If thou hast doubts of this, tell me what are
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the troubles in which men live? The griefs, the fears, the passions, the suspicions, the maliciousness, and other tribulations which afflict the Soul, and to which every man is so subject, that he is often distressed without any cause; he fears, when there is no reason to fear; and when there is no other to torment, he torments himself, as Holy Job says—*Why hast thou set me as a mark against Thee, so that I am a burden to myself?*

Who can count the miseries of the body? How hard oftentimes must we work, to obtain only a piece of bread with which to sustain life. The beasts and birds are fed without any labour or occupation, but man is forced to work day and night, and to travel by sea and land, that he may get his living. This is the misery which Job lamented when he said—*Whose hope shall be cut off, whose trust shall be a spider's web.* For as this little insect works night and day in spinning her web, wasting and consuming herself to finish it, and all this long and tedious work serves only to catch flies; even so does miserable man toil night and day, both with his mind and body, and all his labour serves only to secure trifling things of even less value. And sometimes it happens, that when after much trouble, the web is finished, a gust of wind suddenly blows it and the maker of it away, so that they both perish together in a moment.

And even if with all these miseries, our life were certain and secure, then our wretchedness would
not

not be so great. But though our life is secure from hunger, it is not so from disease, nor from any illness which may assail it. And who can number the many diseases to which man is by nature prone. Medical books are full of the accounts of these diseases and their remedies; and every day science increases with the appearance of new illnesses, which exceed the old ones in number and variety. Yet amongst all these remedies, thou shalt hardly find one that is pleasant; whilst some indeed are more painful than the very disease itself, so that one cannot overcome one torture without undergoing a greater.

Should anyone be so happy as not to have been afflicted with these evils, he is not secure from other accidents, which we see happen to those who have not been troubled with disease. How many thousands are drowned by shipwreck. How many are killed in war. How many are in danger from earthquakes, from floods, from the falling of houses, from the bites and stings of poisonous creatures. How many women die in childbirth, or who purchase the lives of their children, with their own death. And although the animal creation fight against us, and though all things created to serve us, are not less dangerous than serviceable to us; even though this be so, there might be a remedy, if men were to agree together and showed themselves as conformable in peace, as they are in nature. But, alas, this is not the case, for they often raise their
arms

arms against one another ; and amongst all creatures in the world, there is not one against whom man is so hardened as against those of his own kind.

How many engines of war, and weapons, have men invented to defend themselves, and to kill others ; how many has the sword of the enemy deprived of life ; how many threatenings, robberies, injuries, dishonours, deaths, do men daily suffer at the hand of their fellows. Neither land nor sea, road nor house, are safe from man's chief enemy, man. What angry man is not prepared to take vengeance against his adversary ? What mean so many warlike inventions, but to increase on every side the misery of the human race ? When Heaven and earth pardon us, we are still persecuted by the companions of our own nature. Of one man, and he was reckoned merciful amongst the Emperors, it is said that he and his army slew in war above a million of men. Consider, then, how many more he would have slain, had he been cruel ; but he was commended and praised for his mercy. And a certain philosopher, who wrote a book upon death, in which he speaks of the many different causes of death in the world, at last came to the conclusion, that a much greater number of men have been killed by their brethren, than by all natural causes put together.

Were we to consider the miseries incident to the different estates of man, our wretchedness is

much increased. How ignorant is infancy ; how foolish is childhood ; how rash is youth ; how weary is old age. What is infancy, but an animal in the form of man ; what is childhood, but a horse without a rein ; what is old age, but a weight of infirmity ? The greatest desire men have, is to live till they become old ; and yet when they arrive at old age, they require more help at that time than at any other, and receive less assistance ; for the aged man is oftentimes forsaken of the world, of his kinsfolk, and of his friends, even of his own senses, for the use of reason leaves him, and he has for his companion nothing but infirmity. To this state all men desire to attain ; and to this end comes all worldly felicity and happiness. And in truth, concerning the state of man, we should never cease, were we to show how little contentment is to be found in it, and how everyone desires to change his condition for that of others, thinking to find in it more happiness. Thus are we like a sick man, who tosses about in his bed, thinking that by constant changes, he shall be more easy than he was before ; but he is not so, because the root of the disease is in himself.

Finally, this life is such that the Wise King had good reason to say of it—*Great travail is created for every man, and an heavy yoke is upon the sons of Adam, from the day that they go out of their mother's womb, till the day that they return to the mother of all things.* And a Saint of old
has

has even dared to say, that this life would seem little less evil to him than that of Hell, were it not for the hope, that by living well, he might attain to Heaven. Though these miseries are a punishment for our sins, yet is it a merciful punishment, and has been ordained by a Merciful SOVEREIGN, to withdraw our hearts from an inordinate love of this life. The reason He is pleased to make this life so bitter is, to wean us from it, that we may not care so much for it, nor fix our love upon it. For this object, He causes us to have affliction in this life, that we may the more readily forsake it, and long more exceedingly after the Life eternal. For if we are so unwilling to forsake this life, and long so much for the good things it can give us, what should we do if our life was pleasant to us ; who would despise it for GOD's sake ; who would exchange it for Heaven ; or would be able to say with the Apostle—*I have a desire to depart, and to be with CHRIST ?*

The last Misery of man, which is Death.

To all these miseries succeeds the most terrible of all, that of death. Of this a poet well says—the best days of man are those which pass first ; then follow a multitude of diseases ; then a weary old age and continual trouble ; and at last comes the bitterness of death. This the end of man's life, of which holy Job said—*I know that Thou wilt*

wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.

Of the sorrows which are contained in this last misery, I shall now say nothing. I will only notice what a holy Preacher of the Church said when speaking of death—O Death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee ; how quick is thine advent ; how secret is thine approach ; how doubtful is thine hour ; how universal is thy dominion. The most powerful cannot fly from thee ; wise men cannot avoid thee. Thou makest the strong to lose their strength. Before thee, no one is rich ; for none can buy life with gold. Thou art with all ; thou followest all ; in every place art thou found. Thou witherest the grass ; thou changeest the wind ; thou dost corrupt the air ; thou dost alter the world ; thou dost dry up the sea. Other things increase and diminish ; thou alone dost remain the same. Thou art an engine ever in motion ; a sword which no one can blunt ; a snare into which many fall. Thou art the prison, into which every one must enter ; a sea, in which all perish ; a pain, all must suffer ; a tribute, all must pay. O cruel Death, why art thou not weary of coming to us at the most peaceful of times, and carrying us off in the midst of our business ? Thou dost rob us in an hour of what took many years to collect. Thou hast cut off the succession of families. Thou hast filled the world with orphans. Thou joinest the beginning and the end, without there being any middle

middle. Finally, thou art such an one, that Almighty God washeth His Hands of thee, saying by the mouth of the Wise Man—that He *made not Death, neither hath He pleasure in the destruction of the living.*

These and many others are the Miseries of our life; and man ought to meditate upon them, for two great benefits may be obtained from their consideration. From the first, a knowledge and contempt for the vanities of the world; from the other, a contempt of self. To attain both of these ends, this meditation may greatly help us.

Wouldst thou know clearly what the glories of the world are? Consider attentively the conditions of human life, and thou shalt see distinctly what they are. Tell me, can the glory of man last longer than his life? Most decidedly not; since the glory is an accident founded upon this life; and when this life fails, all that is built upon it fails likewise; and no riches, or pleasures can abide with a man beyond the grave. Now if this life is what thou hast heard, if it be short, uncertain, frail, changeful, deceitful, and full of sorrow, how long can a building last, which is built on such a foundation? How long shall these accidents continue, which are raised upon so weak a support? They shall surely last no longer than the foundation itself. Nay, even at times they will decay before the foundation, for we have often

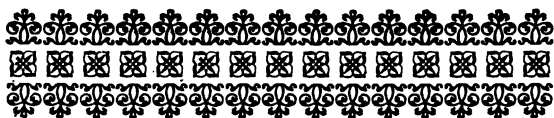
often seen the fortunes of a man decline before the end of his life.

Again, if it be true what a poet has said, that this life is but a shadowy dream, what will the glory of the world appear to thee, since it is shorter than thy life? In what esteem wouldst thou hold a beautiful building, if it was based on a sandy foundation? Or how wouldst thou value a waxen image, be it never so richly worked, if it must needs be placed in the sun; for it would then assuredly melt, and the beauty of the figure would soon vanish away? Why do we think little of the beauty of flowers, except because they are so fragile, that when they are divided from their stalk, they soon lose their beauty; for it is impossible to find lasting beauty in a corrupt and fragile material? It follows, from these things, that the glory of man is as the life of man; for though this glory may remain till after life, yet what avail will it be to him who has no feeling of it? Of what use is it now to any great painter, that his works are praised? Undoubtedly of none; but as a Saint has said of an infidel writer—Woe to thee, O man, who art praised in this world where thou art not, and art tormented in the world where thou art.

Many other advantages may be derived from this meditation; for if thou considerest attentively all these miseries, thine eyes will open, and in wonder at the blindness of man thou wilt surely exclaim—What cause have these miserable descendants

scendants of Adam to be proud; from whence comes all this arrogance, and contempt for others, such esteem for ourselves, such forgetfulness of God? Of what is it thou art so proud, dust and ashes, and why dost thou magnify thyself, thou silly child of earth? Why art thou vain, if thou look at the vileness of thy condition; and why is the glory of the world so eagerly sought after, if thou art subject to so many miseries? And what sweet thing is there, which is not spoilt by the intermingling of so many bitter things? Therefore, if this life is only a vale of tears, a prison of guilty people, a place of banishment for the condemned, how canst thou instead of tears, have such vanity and longings for the pomp of the world; such laying up of provision for this life; such a neglect of the next? How canst thou live as if thou wert born to live and die like the beasts which perish, instead of having a place in Heaven with the Holy Angels? Thou art indeed infatuated with misery, if so many arguments are not enough to open thine eyes, and to make thee discern the blindness of thy Soul.

**Third**



Third Consideration.

OF DEATH.

Of the hour of Death : Of three things which assist us in the consideration of Death : Of the uncertainty of the hour of Death : Of the dread of our future Fate : Of the account we must give at the hour of Death : Of the agony of Death : Of what befalls both body and Soul after Death.

Of the hour of Death.



DEATH is the subject thou must think of to-day ; and it is one of the most profitable meditations, a man can consider, since by it true Wisdom may be obtained, how to avoid sin, as well as how to prepare betimes for the hour of death.

In order that this meditation may be profitable to thee, it will be well for thee to ask of thy Divine LORD to allow thee to realize how this last battle is to be fought ; that thou mayest be able to arrange thy affairs, and direct thy life, as thou wouldst wish thou hadst done, when the time comes.

comes. That thou mayest feel the more deeply about it, think upon death, not as of a thing which is to come, but as if it were now even present with thee, that thou art now lying upon thy bed, given over by the doctors, and assured that thou wilt certainly die. Think first, how uncertain is the hour in which death shall come upon thee. Thou knowest not in what day, in what place, or in what form it will assail thee. All thou art certain of is, that thou hast to die; all the rest is uncertain, except that the hour usually comes, when man is most careless and forgetful of it.

The second thought is, of the separation that will take place, not only from the well-loved things of earth, but also between the Soul and body, who have been such old and loving companions. If it be thought such a great evil for a man to be banished from his native country, though he may take with him whatever he best loves, how much greater shall the entire separation be from everything at home, from friends, parents, children, and all worldly things. If animals are distressed, when removed from the companionship of those with whom they were wont to feed; what will be the anguish of thy heart, when thou art separated from those in whose company thou hast borne the yoke and trouble of life. Consider the uncertainty a man will feel, when he pictures to himself how his Soul will appear after death. For as regards his body, he knows for certain, that however much it may have

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been

been honoured on earth, it has no other destiny than the grave hereafter. But to the Soul, no one knows what shall happen, nor into what lot it shall fall, for though the Divine Mercy gives encouragement, it well feels dismayed at the thought of its own sinfulness.

Think again, how great is the Goodness of Almighty God, and how unsearchable are His Judgments, which oftentimes destroy the power and strength of a man, and change his destiny. Thus the penitent Thief was raised from the cross to Paradise; Judas, from being one of the chief Apostles, fell into Hell; Manasses found a place for repentance after so many sins; and Solomon—we know not indeed if he found it, after his fall from much holiness. This then is one of the greatest anxieties we shall suffer from, to know that glory and punishment are eternal, and not to know into which of these two conditions we shall fall.

To this sorrow is added another, and not a less one; the account we shall have to give of ourselves, which is enough to make the stoutest heart amongst us to tremble. It is written of a holy Man, that when he was dying he began to fear; and when his disciples said to him—Father, dost thou fear in this hour, he answered—Sons, this fear is not new to me, for I have always lived in it. Then will appear to man the sins of his past life, like a legion of enemies attacking him; and the least of these sins will cause him the greatest

greatest fear. He will remember his broken vows; the poor he has neglected or ill-treated; the neighbour he has scandalized. Then shall cry out against him, not the blood of Abel, but the Precious BLOOD of CHRIST, Whom he hath crucified again, when he scandalized his neighbours; and if his cause is to be judged by the Law which says—*Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth*, what shall he expect, who has been the means of losing an immortal Soul. Oh, how bitter then shall be the remembrance of pleasures, that appeared so sweet in times past. Certainly the Wise Man had reason to say—*Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright; at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder*. Oh, if men only knew how true this is, that no sting of an adder is so sharp as the memory of past and sinful pleasures; for these are the dregs of that poisoned cup of the great Enemy of Souls; these are the leavings of that cup of Babylon, which outwardly appeared so gilded.

After this examination of conscience comes Confession, Absolution, and at the end of all the most Holy Eucharist, which is the last aid the Church can give us at such an extremity. And at this point of our meditation we ought to consider the anxiety and trouble a man must feel for having lived evilly; and now that he is obliged to cry for mercy to Almighty God, his pain and weak-

weakness will hardly allow it. And those last pangs of his illness, which are as it were messengers of Death, how frightful and terrible are they. The dying man pants for breath; his voice becomes hoarse; his feet become cold; his tongue refuses to perform its office; and finally, with the agony of the parting Soul, the senses become troubled, and utterly lose their power. But above all, it is the Soul which then suffers torments, for she remains in an agony, partly at her departure from the body, and partly from fear of Divine Judgment; for she naturally dreads her departure, loving her present state, and dreading the account she will have to give.

After the Soul has left the body, thou hast in spirit yet two journeys to make; the one to accompany the body to its burial, the other to follow the Soul to the settlement of her eternal destiny, considering both cases diligently. Think then, in what a condition the body is left, after the Soul has departed from it; and in what a worthy attire it will be clothed for burial. Consider the funeral, and all that happens at it; the tolling of the bell, the prayers for the departed, the Divine Service, the mournful psalm, the sorrow of friends, and lastly, all those events which are wont to occur until the body is laid in the earth whence it was taken. When thou hast left the body in its narrow grave, strive to follow after the Soul, and take notice of the road she will travel to new regions, where she will at length appear;

appear ; and contemplate with what judgment she shall be judged. Imagine thyself now present at this awful Judgment, where the whole Court of Heaven shall be present, waiting for the sentence, and where, according to the use or abuse of all that she has received, her future destiny shall be decided. Then a strict account shall be required of her life ; of the Inspirations vouchsafed to her of God ; the opportunities she has had to live a holy life ; in what estimation she has held the Precious BLOOD of CHRIST, and how she has made use of the Blessed Sacraments ; and then just Judgment will follow, according to the account she has given.

Of three things which assist us in the consideration of Death.

A meditation on Death is profitable for many reasons, but chiefly for these three. First, to attain true Wisdom ; that is, to know how a man ought to govern his life. For, as learned men say in actions which are ordained to a particular end, the rules and measures to direct them tend towards the same end ; those who build, those who navigate, those who seek anything, always fix their attention, and conform their doings on the end they desire. So is it with the end and termination of our lives, Death, for which we must all prepare.

Behold, how poor and naked a man must depart

part hence ; what a strict account he has to render ; and how soon he shall be forgotten in his grave ; and let him consider, according to these thoughts, how he ought to order his life. After this manner spake a holy Man—Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked must I return to the grave ; therefore why should I lose time in laying up riches, if the end is to be nakedness ? From not considering this end proceed all our errors, our presumption, our pride, our covetousness, our pleasure, and the castles which we build in the air and upon the sand. Were we to remember that in a few days we shall ourselves be in this wretched state, our lives would be more serious and temperate. How could he be presumptuous, who sees himself but dust and ashes ? Who would occupy himself with such lofty thoughts and desires, were he to consider on what a weak foundation his life is built ? Who would seek riches by sea and land, if he were to remember that a poor winding-sheet will be his only payment at the last ? In short, our lives would correct themselves, were we to examine them after this rule.

Hence it has been well said, that the life of a wise man is only one long continued thought upon death, for its consideration teaches him what is something, and what is nothing ; what he ought to follow, and what he ought to avoid conformably with the end for which he has to prepare. And of some ancient philosophers it is written,

ten, that in order to accustom themselves to this thought, they kept graves open, at the entrance of their house, so that going out or coming in, they might always remember the hour of death. To the Prophet Jeremiah, Almighty GOD said—*Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there will I cause thee to hear My Words.* He might well have chosen any other place in which to speak with His Prophet; but, by choosing this place, He seems to give us to understand that the potter's house, the house of clay, which is the grave, is the true school of Wisdom, where GOD is accustomed to teach all Truth to His chosen ones. Here they are taught how great is the vanity of the world, the misery of the flesh, and the shortness of life; and above all, they learn how to know themselves, which is the highest philosophy to which we can attain. Descend then in spirit, O man, into this house of clay, and thou shalt see who and what thou art; to what thou hast to come, and how the beauty of the flesh, and the glory of the world shall then appear. Thus, not knowing how to admire what the world adores, thou shalt learn to despise the world; for the world considers only the painted face of Jezebel, looking out of the window, and thinks not of her wretched fate. For though she was devoured by dogs, GOD caused her extremities to be left whole, that we might see how different the world is to what we imagine it to be; and that we might so consider the face
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of it, as always to remember the great sorrow in which its glory endeth.

The second benefit which we derive from this meditation is this, that it helps us to keep ourselves free from sin, according to the words of the Preacher—*Whatsoever thou takest in hand, remember the End, and thou shalt never do amiss*; for it is a great blessing to be restrained from sinning, and one effectual means is derived from this meditation, which reminds us that we have to die. And yet how easily do we forget this truth; for it is one of the most wonderful things in the world that men, who know that after death a strict account will be demanded of their whole lives, will continue in sin so easily. If a traveller who has only a single piece of money in his purse were to enter an inn, sit down at the table, and order from the host all that he has best in the inn, and then sup at his leisure, without remembering the hour of reckoning, who would not take him for a dishonest man, if not for a fool? Now what greater folly is there, than for men to give themselves unrestrainedly to vice, and sleep soundly in the knowledge of their wickedness; forgetful that when they leave this inn of flesh, a strict account will be demanded of all their sins? For this reason assuredly believe, that the Devil does all he can to make us lose this remembrance, knowing well how much it protects us; otherwise, how would it be possible for men to forget so terrible a thing, which they
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know must assuredly enter into their house? The loss of some possession often makes men to lose sleep and health; why then have we not this thought of death, which, as well for the body as for the Soul, is one of the most awful things that can happen to us? I think it is the greatest of wonders, that men are so careful in things of earth, and so neglectful concerning things of such real value.

The third advantage derived from this meditation is, that it not only teaches us how to live well, but also how to die well. Preparation is a great help in all difficult things; and a great journey like that of death, which reaches from this world to another, cannot be accomplished well, unless we carefully press forward in our course. Nothing great is done well the first time; and since it is such a great and terrible thing to die, and so necessary to die well, let us die many times during our life, that we may be certain of dying well at the hour of death. Those soldiers who have to fight, learn in the time of peace what they have to practise in time of war. The horseman who rides his first race, goes carefully over the ground, and marks it well, that he may find nothing unexpected at the time of the race. Therefore, since we are all obliged to run this race, for there is no man living who shall not see death, and the road as we know is so dark and difficult, and the danger of falling into Hell is so great, it will be well for us to go over this road

road now, and examine its steps one by one, as there is so much to consider in all of them. But let us not, however, be content with examining what passes outwardly by a sick man's bedside; we ought also to try and understand what passes within his heart.

Of the Uncertainty of the hour of Death.

Let us then begin at the beginning of this matter, and let us examine how death, when it does come, comes when we are most thoughtless of its approach. Thus it often happens unto many—for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the LORD so cometh, as a thief in the night; therefore since it is wont to come when men least expect it, yea, even when they are engaged in some worldly business, suddenly death comes upon them, and cuts short the thread of their hopes and fears. Thus is fulfilled the saying of the Prophet—I have cut off like a weaver my life, He will cut me off with pining sickness; from day even to night wilt Thou make an end of me.

The first stroke which death is accustomed to strike, is the fear of death; and great is that blow to the lovers of life. Full of sorrow is this warning to a man, so that his friends will often deceive him when he is sick, though it is to the danger of his miserable Soul. King Saul possessed much courage; but when the Spirit of Samuel appeared to him, and told him that he should

should die in battle, *he fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid.* Now what will he who loves this life feel, when he is in a like position? Then he shall see at once the total separation and banishment from this world, and all that is in it; then shall he see that his hour has come; that that fearful day has dawned at last, and that he must bid farewell to all he has loved in the world. The body shall die once; but his heart shall die as many times as he shall remember the things he loves, for the knife of separation must be laid upon each one of them. The deeper a tooth is rooted in the jaw, the greater is the pain when it is taken out; therefore as the heart of the wicked is deeply rooted in the love of the world, it is impossible for it not to feel great sorrow, when the hour arrives for it to be separated from all it has loved in this life. At that time, the things he has had most affection for shall wound his heart the most grievously, and that which ought to be his comfort in time of sorrow, proves to be in this hour his greatest torment.

A holy Bishop was once thinking on the separation from the world, and all its pleasures, when it seemed that they all came visibly up before him, and said unto him—What, wilt thou leave us for ever, wilt thou never more have anything to do with us? What will a worldly heart feel when it sees itself deprived, and forsaken of all, in that sorrowful hour, so that it is obliged to say
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—There is no more world for me, no more air, no more fun, no more pleasure. Of all am I now deprived ; of all does death despoil me. It has now come before mine eyes ; accomplished is the number of my days ; now do I die to everything, and everything dies to me. O world, I return to dust. Friends, wife, children, in the flesh we shall never more behold each other ; for to GOD I return, Who made me.

Another separation there is, which is more to be dreaded than the last ; that of the Soul from the body, who are such old and beloved companions. Of everything had the Devil deprived Job, except of his life ; and it appeared to him, that in comparison with this, all other afflictions were light—*Yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life.* This is naturally the thing the most loved ; and this is the separation which is most deeply felt. If a traveller separates from one with whom he has been in company for some time, and is sorrowful at losing his comrade ; how full of grief will be the parting between two such great friends and companions as the body and the Soul, who have been together from their birth until now, and who have received such mutual benefits one from another ? How sad it will be, when the Spirit says to the flesh—Without thee, from henceforth I must live alone ; and the flesh says to the Spirit—How can I live without thee, since from thee I have received my very being ?

Of

Of the dread of our future fate.

After this, man naturally thinks of the place where his body has to remain after death, and he sees that all he can have is at the most but a little grave. Wonder at such a fate as this ; for considering the esteem in which he held his body, knowing into what a miserable place it has to come, he cannot but be full of anxiety. Behold how narrow is the house prepared for him in the earth, how dark, how full of worms, and bones and skulls of the dead. When he sees this body, which was accustomed to be well treated, and looked upon as his god ; this palate, for whose gratification sea and land provided ; this flesh, for whose adorning silk and gold were used, and for whose comfort the softest bed was provided, thrown into such a place, there to be eaten of worms : when he considers all this, he will see that to his soft bed will succeed the hard earth, and to his costly clothing, a poor shroud ; and instead of so many servants, and such luxurious food, he will have worms sweetly feeding upon him.

It is not, however, the part of thoughtful men to be distressed at these things ; for the sight of them each day takes away from wonder and astonishment ; notwithstanding this the Wise Man marvelled at this misery, though it was one of daily occurrence, and says—*For that which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts, even one thing befalleth*
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them ; as the one dieth, so dieth the other : yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence over a beast. If the body were to have some noble end, or were to end in something of price or value, then some comfort might be found in death ; but it is to be wondered at, that so excellent a creation as man shall end in becoming the most ignoble thing in the world. This is that great misery of which holy Job had such reason to say — *For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again ; and that the tender branch thereof will not cease ; but man dieth and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he ?* Great, undoubtedly, was the punishment laid upon the sons of Adam for sin ; and well did the Everlasting JUDGE know what sentence He pronounced, when He said—*Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

But this is not the greatest cause a man has for fear. There is still a greater one ; even when the Soul looks forward, and thinks upon the dangers of the life to come, and to imagine what will become of her hereafter. This is as it were to launch out from the mouth of the harbour and to sail into the open sea, where nothing is to be seen but the water and the sky, which to young sailors is a cause of fear. For when a man considers what an eternity follows after death, and through what regions, which have never been entered by living man, he must now begin to travel, the glory or pain which he will have to undergo,

undergo, and not knowing to which of the two states he shall attain, he cannot help being troubled and disturbed. Thus when Benhadad, King of Syria, was sick, he was dismayed ; for he knew not whether he should die of his illness, he therefore sent the Captain of his host, with *forty camels' burden of every good thing of Damascus*, to the Prophet Elisha, humbly beseeching him to deliver him out of his perplexity, and to tell him for certain whether or not he should recover of his disease. If the love of a life, as short as this one is, causes a man such distress, what care will a wise man take, when he sees himself in such a state, that he can say with truth—In the space of a few hours will be given me, either Life eternal, or death for evermore ; and yet he knows not for certain which will be his destiny ? What suffering can be equal to this ? Tell me, if a King were taken prisoner by the Turks, and when his ambassadors came to ransom him, the infidels agree that his fate should be determined by lot, that if he draws a certain number, he should be restored to his Kingdom, and if he draws it not, he should be cast into a burning fiery furnace ; tell me, when they are counting these lots, and the King is doubtful of his future fate, how fearful must he be, how disturbed, how troubled, and how ready to offer all that he has to Almighty God, if only he may be delivered out of this danger. And what is all this, but a shadow compared with the danger

danger we are speaking of? How much greater is the furnace we have to fear; how much more painful is our perplexity; since on the one side, Angels are waiting to bear us to the Kingdom of Heaven, and on the other devils, who are ready to cast us into Hell; and no one knows which of the two will be his destiny. Consider how heavy thy heart will be at that moment, how confused, and abased before the Face of Him, Who alone can save thee from this danger. It seems to me, as if no tongue could express the agony.

Of the account we must give at the hour of death.

After this great anguish, there follows another not less great, especially to those who have lived evilly, which is this, the beginning so late to think of the account they have to render of the wickedness and sins of their past life. Oh, how confounded will those wicked ones be then, when the fear of punishment makes them open their eyes, which before were closed to the knowledge of their guilt. Oh, how clearly then, shall they see how false are the gods whom they have served; and how deceitful the riches they so eagerly sought after; and how, by following that road, they have secured their own perdition.

The King of Syria sent his servants to take the Prophet Elisha, and when God, at the prayer of the Prophet, struck them with blindness, Elisha said unto them—*Follow me, and I will bring you*
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to the man whom ye seek. And he led them into Samaria, and placed them in the city in the midst of their enemies ; and said—*LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see.* Now tell me, when they opened their eyes, and saw before whom they were present, when they expected to find only him whom they sought, how amazed, how confused must they have been. This simile may well represent to us the course, and the deceitfulness of our life. We all walk in this world by the way of our appetites and desires. Some seek riches, others honour, others pleasure, others position and dignity ; and to each one it appears to be well, if he obtains what he desires. But when the presence of death shows us the vanity of our hopes, and when we find ourselves behind-hand with our account, then we clearly perceive the deceitfulness of the world, and we see that by the way we thought to find rest, we have fallen into perdition. O wretched men that we are, how blindly do we wander in the world ; what eyes shall we then have ; how changed will be our judgment then, to what it now appears to us. Then we shall see how vain is everything that we possessed in the world ; how false are her possessions ; how crooked are her ways ; how full of lies are her promises ; how bitter her pleasures ; how empty her glory. Then, though too late, shall we discover that her riches were thorns, and her pleasures were poison. And in truth, how closed are our eyes, when without

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knowing where we shall be at the end of the day, we find ourselves in the streets of Samaria, in the snares of Divine Justice, and surrounded by our enemies. How confounded will the wicked be in that hour; how will they see that they have been beguiled; and how truly may each one of them say—Oh, wretched man that I am, what advantage have I derived from past pleasures, but only to make the JUDGE, Who is about to sentence me, indignant. My pleasures are ended, and have left no remembrance at which I can rejoice; they are as if they had never been; nay, rather, they remain pricking at my heart, and cause my Soul doubts, and distress, lest I should be tormented for ever. Is this the fruit I have reaped from my pleasures? Is this the result I derived from past sensualities? Pleasures have already ceased to be; they are past and will never return; and perhaps, for those pleasures which endured but for a moment, I shall have to undergo eternal torments. What blindness can be greater? How much better would it have been for me, never to have been born, than to have offended in the least degree. How much better would it have been, if the earth had opened her mouth, and swallowed me up, before I ever thought of offending Thee, O my God. Oh, miserable day, oh, wretched hour, in which I grieved Thee. Why did I not then remember this day of Judgment? Why were my eyes blinded with such little splendour? Is
this

this the road I took for perfection? Is this the end to which the honours of the world come? Are the things I esteemed so much formerly, of so little value now?

To this misery succeeds another, the dread of the account we shall have to give. This is the greatest sorrow that can then happen to us; for besides fearing the Judgment of Almighty God, the devils will increase this fear at that hour, who were before wont to extenuate it, with the hopes of Divine Mercy. Then they will remind us of the inexorable Justice of God, which they will show us to be so great that He pardoned not His Own SON, for the sins of others. If these things happen in a green tree, what will they be in a dry? Then will the wicked man begin to tremble, and to say within himself—O wretched man that I am, if it be true which Holy Scripture declares—That God renders to every one according to his works; I, who have done so many evil ones, what reward can I hope for? If as the holy Gospel says—According to its fruit the tree shall be judged, who has brought forth such evil fruits as I have done; what Judgment therefore can I expect? If as the Psalmist says—*Who shall ascend into the Hill of the LORD; or who shall rise up in His holy Place? Even he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; and I, whose hands have been unclean, and whose heart is impure, whither shall I go?* If as the Wise King says—*He that turneth away his ear from*

from hearing the Law, even his prayer shall be abomination; what hope have I, who have closed them before GOD? With what face, O my GOD, shall I now appear before Thee, and implore Thee to hear me; since Thou hast so often called me, and I have not answered? How can I ask Thee to receive me into Thine House, since Thou hast so often knocked in vain at the door of my heart? How can I expect to find Thee in the time of need, since Thou hast so often sought for me in the time of prosperity, and hast not found me? With what right can I now beseech Thee, at the end of my journey, to grant unto me Heaven, seeing that I have passed my whole life in the service of Thy enemy? Oh, how justly, LORD, couldst Thou then say to me—Thou hast served the world, the flesh, and the devil; by them shalt thou be rewarded.

This was the way in which Elisha made answer to King Jehoram, who had passed all his life in the worship of idols, and who, in the time of need sent for the Prophet to aid him. Then said the holy Man to him—*What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother.* Oh, how have we imitated this wicked king in our life, and how shall we imitate him in our death; in life we serve the world, and at the hour of death we shall turn to GOD. But what can we expect in that hour, but that He will say to us—What dost thou hope to receive from Me, seeing that
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thou hast never served Me? Get thee hence to the idols thou hast loved, and worshipped; and see what they will give thee, in payment for thy services. *When thou criest*, said Almighty God, by the mouth of His holy Prophet, *let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them. But he that putteth his trust in Me, shall possess the land, and shall inherit My holy Mountain.*

Now does the sick man begin to desire space for repentance, and thinks that if he might obtain it, he would fast, and pray, and give alms to the poor; and not content with this, he would live a most holy life. But when he sees, by the increase of his sickness, that his request is not granted, he remembers the many opportunities he has wasted. Now he is grieved at this loss, and knows that he well deserves punishment for having neglected what he might have done. Oh, to how many of us does this happen; we waste the time Almighty God gives us, in vanity and pleasure; and when we need it most, we want it back again.

Of the agony of Death.

When the sick man draws near to his end, then does the Church help her children as much as possible with prayer, and the most Holy Sacrament; and because the necessity is so great, since at that time his future state is about to be decided, she also calls upon the faithful to help him

him with their prayers. What else is the Office for the Visitation of the Sick, which is commanded to be used on behalf of the dying, but that the Church, like a pitiful mother, grieving over the danger of her child, calls upon God for help?

After this comes the agony of Death, the greatest of all struggles, when the candle of a man's life is about to go out. Then we tell the sufferer that the hour for his departure has arrived, and that he must for the last time commend himself to Almighty God. Then indeed, when the Soul of the sick man is about to leave the body, and each of his members is distressed at the separation, then once more is renewed the anguish of the Soul; then again is she in agony, not fearing death so much as the terrors of the Judgment which is drawing near.

A Holy Man, having arrived at this last extremity, began to tremble and fear; but he encouraged himself by saying—Depart, O my Soul; what fearest thou, for threescore years and ten thou hast served CHRIST, and dost thou now fear death? Now, if he feared, who had served CHRIST for so many years, what will that man fear, who has offended his Divine Master for so long a time; what shall he do; where shall he go; whose counsel shall he take? Oh, that men would only understand whence all this perplexity proceeds. What, thinkest thou, what were the feelings of Isaac, when his father held him bound hand and foot on the Altar, and was
about

about to sacrifice him? Above him, he saw his father's knife shining; below him, he saw the fire burning. The servants, who might have succoured him, were at the foot of the mountain; and he, being bound hand and foot, could neither fly nor defend himself. And in what condition, thinkest thou, again, was the heart of the holy Man, when he saw himself thus situated? Surely the Soul of the wicked must be much more alarmed at this dreadful hour; because wherever he turns his eyes, he sees nothing but cause for fear. If he looks above him, he sees the Sword of Divine Justice threatening him; if he looks below him, he sees the open grave which is awaiting him; if he looks before him, he sees his conscience smiting him; if he looks round about, he sees Angels and Devils expecting, and watching the decision of his sentence; if he looks back, he sees how his wife, his children, his relations, his possessions, and the pleasures of this life remain behind him, and are unable to help him, since he must depart out of this life alone, and all the others must remain in it. Finally, if after this, he turns his eyes upon himself, he is amazed, and would if possible fly from himself. To leave the body is intolerable to him; to remain in it is impossible; and to delay his departure will not be allowed. The past appears to him to be but a breath of wind; the future, as it really is, appears to be infinite. What will the wretched creature do in such anguish?

guish? Oh, what blindness and folly of the sons of men, who seek not in time to prepare themselves for this terrible trial.

Of what befalls both body and Soul after Death.

After this long struggle, the Soul is rooted out of the body, and departs from her former dwelling-place, and leaves the body deprived of all that it had of good.

Now let us consider what is to be the destiny of each. Let us first consider in what condition the body is left, after the departure of the Soul. What can be more esteemed than the body of a Prince, when he is alive? What is more despised than the same body, when he is dead? Where is then that majesty, that beauty, that authority before which all trembled; and where is that kneeling and speaking to him with reverence? How quickly has all this pomp passed away, as if it had been but a dream, or a play which is over in an hour. Then the shroud is immediately prepared, which is the richest possession he can take with him from this life, and which is the only property the wealthiest can have at such an hour. Therefore with much reason did the holy Psalmist say—*Be not thou afraid, though one be made rich, or if the glory of his house be increased; for he shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow him.* Then they dig a grave seven or eight feet long;

long ; and with this narrow resting-place the body must be content. There they appoint him his home for ever ; there must he be in company with other dead bodies ; and there the worms will crawl out to receive him. He is placed in a poor sheet ; his face is covered with a cloth ; his hands and feet are bound, for then it is certain that he cannot leave his prison, nor defend himself against any injury. Then the earth receives him into her bosom ; the bones of the dead welcome him ; the dust of his ancestors embraces him, and invites him to that house which is appointed for all living ; and the last honour which the world can give him, is to cast a little earth upon him, and to cover him with a sod, that it may not see his corruption.

Such is the end of all the pomps and vanities of the world ; after this manner a man's friends leave him in his narrow home, in this tomb of oblivion, in this dark prison where he shall remain with only solitude for his companion. O world, where is thy glory ? O riches, where is thy power ? O friends, where have you left me ; why have you buried your former companion so soon ; how is it that the wheel of my happiness has been so quickly turned about ? Those who saw Jezebel, when, by the Justice of God, she was eaten of dogs so that nothing remained of her former beauty, but her skull, the palms of her hands, and her feet ; those who had known her in her glory, and seeing her in such

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a condition, and being astonished at such a sight, asked, saying,—Is this that Jezebel ; is this that Jezebel ? And all who passed that way, seeing how she had been eaten up by dogs, repeated the same exclamation—Is this that Jezebel ; is this that Queen ; that great Lady in Israel ? Is this she who was so powerful, who possessed the goods of her subjects by shedding the blood of their owners ? Can death bring down the most powerful to so low a condition ? Therefore, brother, do thou to-day go down in Spirit into the tombs of the princes or of other great ones of the earth, whom thou hast known or heard of in the world ; consider what fearful deformity now possesses them, and thou wilt see how much reason thou hast to exclaim—Is this that Jezebel, is this that flesh which I knew when living ; is this the same body, the same eyes, the same tongue ; is this the end of crowns and sceptres ; is this the end of the glory of the world ? Oh, how often, says a holy Man, has it befallen me to enter into the sepulchre of the dead. Astonished and wondering at what I see, I fix my eyes upon these corpses. I set the bones in order. I join the hands together. I put the feet in their proper place. I say to myself—Behold these feet, how many journeys have they made ; these hands, how much they have taken and kept ; these eyes, how many vanities have they beheld ; this mouth, which has eaten so many delicacies ; this skull, which has built so many castles in the
air ;

air ; this dust, the remains of that flesh for whose gratification so many sins have been committed, and for which the Soul of this body is perhaps suffering for ever. Then I leave this dreadful place, and meeting with men alive, I look upon them, and reflect that both they and I must shortly come to the same condition. What then, oh wretched man that I am, what is the use of these riches, if I am to be thus deprived of all ? Of what use are the ornaments of dress, if I am to become so naked ? Of what use are pleasures and feasts if I am to be eaten of worms ?

Having now left the body in the grave, let us follow the Soul to a new world, which is as it were another hemisphere ; where there is a new Heaven, and a new earth ; where there is another sort of life, and another way of understanding, and knowledge. Having left the flesh, the Soul enters into this new region, where the living cannot enter. Consider what she would do in so strange a land, if she were not defended and guarded by the holy Angels. O my Soul, said a Saint of old, how terrible will be the day, when thou enterest into that unknown region, to reach which such terrible monsters shall assail thy path. Who will defend thee ; who will take thy part ; who will deliver thee from those lions which are raging with hunger, and which seem ready to devour thee ?

This road is certainly fearful ; but much more so is the Judgment which will then take place.

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Who can declare its strictness ; how righteous is the JUDGE ; how eager are our accusers ; how small the number of our intercessors ; what a particular examination shall be made of our account ; how strict shall the judgment of our lives be ? Wherefore well did S. Peter say—*If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ?* It is worthy of notice, that though man would think that those things which we have most loved on earth, will help us most at our latter end ; not only they do not help us, but are ever an occasion of pain and grief to us. The thing which Absalom admired and prized above all others was his hair ; and, by the just Judgment of Almighty God, his hair was the cause of his death. This same judgment is prepared for all the wicked in that hour. All that they most loved in the world, and for which they offended God, shall make their account more dreadful, and occasion them the greater torments. Then shall our children, whom we sought either lawfully or unlawfully to enrich, accuse us. Then shall our lands, our houses, and our pleasures, which we made our idols, become our executioners, and tormentors. Then does the ALMIGHTY judge all the gods of Egypt. Then does He ordain that those things which were our glory, shall at that time be the cause of our falling.

If the severity then, of this Divine Sentence be at all proportioned to our sins, who shall be
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able to abide it? An ancient Father used to say, that he always lived in fear of three things. The first was, the departure of the Soul from the body; the second was, the time when he should appear before the Judgment Seat of GOD; and the third was, when his sentence was irrevocably pronounced. Above all then, O Christian man, consider, if thy sentence be thy eternal condemnation, what anguish shall that be for thee, and what a triumph for thine enemies? Then shall that saying of the Prophet be fulfilled—*All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee, they hiss and gnash the teeth, they say—We have swallowed her up; certainly this is the day that we looked for, we have found, we have seen it.* But do Thou, O Sweet JESU, lighten the eyes of my Soul, that I sleep not in death, lest mine enemy say—I have prevailed against him. Amen.





Fourth Consideration.

OF THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

Of the Day of Judgment : Of the Effects produced on the Soul by the Fear of God : Of the Strictness of the Day of Judgment : Of the Signs which shall precede the last Judgment : Of the End of the World, and the Resurrection of the Dead : Of the Coming of the JUDGE, and the Manner of Judgment.

Of the Day of Judgment.



ONSIDER now of the Day of Judgment, in order that by means of this meditation, those two affections, which every faithful Christian ought to have, may be awakened in thy Soul, the fear of God, and the hatred of sin.

Consider first, how terrible that Day shall be, in which the account of every son of Adam shall be examined, and the career of our life shall be concluded, and the final sentence which will deter-

determine in what state we shall be placed for ever and ever, shall be pronounced. This dreadful Day will embrace in itself all other days either past or to come ; for on that Day the world must give an account of all time, and then the Wrath and Anger of Almighty God, which has been reserved through all past ages, shall be poured out upon the ungodly. Alas, how awful shall that Anger be, that mighty flood of Divine Indignation, collected against the sins of the whole world, from its beginning to its close. With much reason did the holy Prophet of old say—*That Day is a Day of wrath, a Day of trouble and distress, a Day of wasteness and desolation, a Day of darkness and gloominess, a Day of clouds and thick darkness, a Day of the trumpet and alarm, against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.*

Secondly, consider the terrible signs which shall precede that great Day—*there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring.* They shall all anticipate their end before it really comes, and shall tremble and begin to fall, before they fall indeed. But, as for men, they will wander about in anguish and fear of death, listening to the fearful roaring of the sea, and beholding the mighty storms which shall then arise ; and by reason of these signs they shall conjecture what miseries and calamities are about to come upon the world. Thus they will wander about, terrified and fearful. Their countenances
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pale and disfigured ; dead before death ; sentenced before judgment ; increasing their danger by their fear ; each one being so occupied with himself, that he will remember not his neighbour. Neither does the father remember his son, nor the son his father. No one shall do anything for any one else, because no man shall be sufficient even for himself. Ancient and uninspired words of prophecy say, that at that Day wild beasts shall roar in the fields and in the cities ; the trees shall sweat drops of blood ; the sea shall cast up its fish on dry ground. And if these things seem incredible, the holy Gospel tells us much more, when it speaks of *men's hearts failing them for fear*, which is more dreadful than that the sea should be dried up ; or when it speaks of *the powers of the heavens being shaken*, which is worse than the creatures on the earth being distressed.

Thirdly, consider that universal flood of fire, which shall precede the Coming of the JUDGE ; and that dreadful sound of the trumpet, which the Archangel shall sound to summon all the generations of the world into one place, that they may be present at the great Judgment ; and above all, consider the fearful Majesty with which the JUDGE shall come. It is thus described by the Prophet Nahum—*The LORD hath His Way in the whirlwind, and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His Feet ; He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers ; Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languish-*

languisheth; the mountains quake at Him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His Presence; yea, the world, and all that dwell therein: who can stand before His Indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of His Anger; His Fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him.

After this, think how strict will be the account required of us. Truly, as Job says—*How should a man be just with GOD, if he will contend with Him, he cannot answer Him one of a thousand.* What then will every wicked man feel when Almighty GOD begins to examine him, and through his conscience to say to him—Come hither, O wretched man; what hast thou seen in Me, thus to despise Me, and to desert from My Side to that of the enemy? I have raised thee from the dust of the earth. I have created thee after Mine Own Image. I have given thee Grace and Strength, that thou mightest be able to increase My Glory. But thou, little esteeming the Commandments I gave thee, hast preferred to follow the lies of the deceiver, instead of the holy Law of the LORD. To deliver thee from this fall, I came down upon earth from Heaven, and underwent the most painful sufferings; for thee I fasted; for thee I journeyed; for thee I watched; for thee I sweated great Drops of Blood; for thee I suffered persecutions, insults, blasphemies, scoffings, torments, rebukes, and the death of the Cross; and, in a word, for thy sake, I was
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born in poverty, I lived in sorrow, I died in suffering. This Cross, these nails, are witnesses of what I suffered; these Wounds in My Hands, and Feet are witnesses; Heaven and earth, before whom I suffered, are witnesses; the sun, the moon, and the stars, which in that hour were darkened, are witnesses. And now, what hast thou done with this Soul of thine, which I have purchased by the shedding of My Blood? In whose service hast thou employed that which I so dearly bought? Oh, foolish and adulterous generation, why hast thou laboured more to serve this enemy of thine, with sorrow, than Me, thy CREATOR and REDEEMER, with joy? Be amazed, O ye Heavens, at this wonder; let thy gates fall down with sorrow—*For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the Fountain of Living Water, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.* I have called to you many times, and ye have not answered. I have knocked at your doors, and ye have not opened unto Me. I have extended My Arms upon the Cross, and ye would not behold them. Ye have despised My Counsels, My Promises, and My Threats. But now the hour has come. Wherefore, O ye Angels, judge, *I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?*

O my Soul, what will the wicked answer then? Those who have thought lightly of holy things;

things; those who have scoffed at holiness, and have despised simplicity; who have followed the law of the world, rather than that of Almighty GOD; and who have been deaf to His Voice, insensible to His many Inspirations, rebellious against His Commands, obdurate and ungrateful for His Chastisements and Benefits—what will they answer then? What will those answer, who have lived, as if there were no GOD; those who have followed no law, but their own interests, as the Prophet Isaiah said—*What will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from afar? to whom flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?* Of what avail shall your riches then be to you, except to carry you away prisoners, and you fall amongst the dead?

After this, consider the terrible Sentence which the JUDGE shall thunder forth against the wicked, and those fearful words, *at which both the ears of everyone that hear it shall tingle—His Lips are full of indignation, and His Tongue as a devouring fire.* What fire shall burn like these words—*Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire?* They are indeed the most terrible words that can be said to one of GOD's creatures; for they refer to *the Fire that never shall be quenched*; they allude to the pain of the lost, the loss of all losses, which is the universal perdition of everything, and the deprivation of the Greatest GOOD, in which all other goods are contained.

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Where then shall those go, who are divided from Thee, O LORD? To what haven shall they fly; what LORD shall they serve? *All that forsake Thee shall be ashamed; and they that depart from Me, shall be written in the earth; because they have forsaken the LORD, the Fountain of living Waters.* Depart from Me, ye cursed, said our Blessed REDEEMER, as if He would say—I entreated you with Blessings, and ye would not come; to-day cursing shall take hold of you. *His delight, says the holy Psalmist, was in cursing, and it shall happen unto him; he loved not Blessing, therefore shall it be far from him.* Our Divine SAVIOUR cursed the barren fig-tree, and dried it up at once, not only the leaves, but also the trunk and the roots, that it might never bear fruit again. And thus shall the wicked one day understand this awful sentence, which shall take away from them all hope of Salvation, and all peace and comfort for ever and for evermore.

But whither wilt Thou send them, O LORD? To everlasting fire. Oh what a place is this for immortal Souls. *Who amongst us, says the Prophet of GOD, who amongst us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* What greater curse can there be than this; what calamity, what sentence, what despair is comparable to this? This is that terrible fire, of which Isaiah said—*The streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning*
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ing pitch ; it shall not be quenched night nor day ; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever ; from generation to generation it shall be waste ; none shall pass through it for ever.

*Of the Effects produced on the Soul by the Fear of
GOD.*

Great are the effects which the Fear of GOD works in the Soul of man ; for, *whofo feareth the LORD, it shall go well with him at the last, and he shall find favour at the day of his death.* And again the Preacher saith—*O how great is he that findeth Wisdom ; yet there is none above him that feareth the LORD ; but the Love of the LORD passeth all things for illumination ; he that holdeth it, whereto shall it be likened ; the Fear of the LORD is the beginning of His Love.* All these are the words of the Wise Man, which show forth clearly how the Fear of GOD is the beginning of all Good, since it is the beginning of His Love ; and not only the beginning, but the increase and perfection of all good things, as a Saint of old bears witness—Truly I know that there is nothing so efficacious to preserve Divine Grace, as always to live in fear of Him, and always to avoid proud and presumptuous thoughts.

In order to secure this precious treasure, it is very profitable to think, and meditate continually on Divine Justice, especially upon that last Judgment at the end of the world, which is the most

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awful event mentioned in Holy Scripture. For such a terrible account is given to us of the last Day, that if it were not Almighty God Himself, Who tells us of it, we should never believe it. Therefore does our Blessed LORD, after having predicted part of it to His Apostles, and fearing lest its greatness might exceed the belief and faith of man, ends His Exhortation with these words—*Verily, I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done; Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away.*

In the Acts of the Holy Apostles it is recorded, when S. Paul was preaching on the *Judgment to come*, before the Governor of Judea, that *Felix trembled* at what the Apostle said, though he was an unbeliever, and had no faith in our holy Religion. Hence it is evident, how terrible must have been those things of which the Apostle spake; since the sound of his words was enough to make an infidel tremble. Consider then what the Christian man must feel, when he hears, reads, or meditates about them, who holds these things as matters of Faith.

Let no one seek to find excuse in his innocence, saying—These threats do not affect me; they refer only to unjust and wicked men. For though a certain Saint of old was holy and good, yet it is reported of him, that as often as he remembered the Day of Judgment, he trembled, both in heart and body. David was a man after
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GOD's own Heart ; yet he says in one of his Psalms, fearing the Day of Reckoning—*Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O LORD, for in Thy Sight shall no man living be justified.* So too was the Apostle, S. Paul, an holy man ; and yet he says—*I judge not mine own self ; for I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified ; but He that judgeth me is the LORD ;* as if he had said, many times it might happen, that our own eyes could not find defects in our own works, and that the Eye of the ALMIGHTY finds them out ; for that which is concealed from the eyes of men, is not hidden in the Sight of GOD. To an indifferent master, a painting appears to be perfect ; but a more famous than he would find many a fault in it. Consider then, how many more defects the Goodness and infinite Wisdom of the ALMIGHTY shall find in such an evil-disposed creature as man who, according to holy Job, *drinketh iniquity like water.* And, if the sword of the LORD found so much to cut off in Heaven, how much more will it find upon earth, where there is nothing but spiritual thorns, and thistles. Who is there of men, who keeps the secret recesses of his Soul so pure and undefiled, as not to see the necessity of exclaiming with the Psalmist—*O cleanse Thou me from my secret faults ?*

Therefore it behoves every one to live in fear of this great Day, be their life never so holy ; and that, because the Day is so terrible ; our life
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is so sinful; the JUDGE is so just; and above all, His Judgments so secret, that no one knows what his destiny will be. Our Blessed LORD Himself said—*Two women shall be grinding together, the one shall be taken, and the other left; two men shall be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left.* By which it is given us to understand, that, though in the same state and manner of life outwardly, one shall be taken to Heaven, and another cast into Hell; so that no one may consider himself safe, whilst he is in this world.

Of the Strictness of the Day of Judgment.

In order to meditate profitably on the greatness of this Judgment, thou must first know, that no tongue in the world can express even the least of the sorrows of that awful Day. The Prophet Joel, when seeking to speak of its greatness, finds himself so confounded, that he began to stammer like a child, and exclaim—*Alas, for the Day, for the Day of the LORD.* In the same manner did Jeremiah speak, when GOD commanded him to preach—*Ah, LORD GOD, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child;* thus signifying, that he was totally unable to discharge the mission which the ALMIGHTY had appointed him to do. And he also gives us to understand, that there is no tongue in the world, which will not be like a stammering child, when it is told of what is to happen on that dreadful Day.

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At the Day of Judgment, the ALMIGHTY will restore to their former beauty in creation, all things which the wicked have marred by their evil deeds ; and as their wicked acts have been so many and so great, even so must the purifying of them be in proportion to the crimes they have committed ; and thus, at last, the world shall be as much beautified by their punishment, as it has been defiled by their wickedness. When a man falls, and puts a limb out of joint, it will cause him more pain, before it can be brought into its right place again. Therefore, since the wicked have disturbed all creation, and have displaced everything from its natural position, when the Great Phylician comes to restore it, by punishing those who cause confusion, how great will be the punishment ?

Not only is this Day called the Day of Wrath, but also the Day of the LORD as it is called by the Prophet Joel. And we must understand by this, that all other days have been the day of man, in which he has done his own will, in defiance of the holy Will of GOD ; but this is called the Day of the LORD, because in it is performed the Will of GOD, instead of the will of man. Now thou canst swear, and blaspheme, Almighty GOD is silent ; but the Day is coming, when He shall break this silence of many days, and when He will answer for His own Honour. Hence, there are, so to speak, but two days in the world, the Day of the LORD, and the day of
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man. In this his day, man can do all he pleases ; and GOD is silent. In this day, Zedekiah may command the Prophet to be cast into a dungeon, where *he is like to die for hunger*, or where he is fed *with the bread of affliction, and with the water of affliction*, and Almighty GOD is silent ; but another Day comes, in which GOD will take Zedekiah's kingdom from him, and give it to another, who will carry him in *fetters of brass* to Babylon ; in which his children shall be slain in his presence, his own eyes shall be put out, and himself shall be put into prison until the day of his death. So that as man is now allowed licence to do all he pleases, so shall GOD, in His Day, do all that He determines without man being permitted to hinder His Divine Pleasure.

Of the Signs which shall precede the last Judgment.

If thou desirest to know what a dreadful Day this shall be, thou must consider the signs which are to precede it, for by them thou shalt be enabled to conceive how awful shall be this Day. No one knows when this Day shall come—*No, not the Angels which are in Heaven, neither the SON, but the FATHER.* But it will be preceded by certain signs, which will shew to men not only that it is at hand, but also the greatness of its coming. For as our Blessed LORD tells us—*Ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars ; see that ye be not troubled ; for all these things must*
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come to pass, but the end is not yet: for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. And above all these things, that persecution shall come which has been so often predicted in Holy Scripture as the greatest event the Church has to dread, namely, the Spirit of Anti-Christ, which shall assail the Church, not only with persecution, but also with apparent and feigned miracles. Consider, says a Saint of old, what a terrible time that of Anti-Christ shall be, when the Christian Martyr offers his body to the Executioner, who will work miracles before his eyes. For then, says our Blessed SAVIOUR, then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor never shall be; and except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the Elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

After these signs, other still more dreadful signs shall appear in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars, of which the LORD spake by the Prophet Ezekiel, saying—*I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light, all the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon My land.* Now, when all these signs appear in the heavens, what can we expect on earth? The air shall be full of lightning, and whirlwind, and fiery stars; the earth

earth shall be full of frightful chafms, and earthquakes shall overthrow not only cities, but shall also engulph the very mountains and hills. Above all other elements, the sea shall be the most disturbed ; and its waves will rage so high, that they will threaten to cover the earth. Those near at hand will be frightened at its rising, and those afar off will be alarmed at the sound. In what a fearful state men shall then be ; how astonished and confused will they be ; they shall even lose the use of their faculties and senses.

Our Blessed LORD uses these words when speaking of this dreadful day—*Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.* What is this ? they will say, What mean these signs ? What shall the world at length bring forth ? What shall be the end of all this great change ? Then their hearts will fail ; they shall behold each other so disfigured and altered, that this would be enough to amaze them even if they had nothing else to dread. All manner of occupation shall cease, and all study, and all desire of gain. Men's hearts will be so filled with terror, that they will verily forget to eat, and to drink, and to do what is needful for the preservation of life. Their desire will be to fly to some safer place ; to defend themselves from the earthquake, the tempest, and the raging of the sea ; they will hide themselves in the caves of the wild beasts ; and the wild beasts will take refuge in the houses
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of men ; and all things will be disorganized and full of confusion.

But though these present evils are so dreadful, the fear of those which are to come is much more so, for no one will know what will be the end of such sad beginnings. Words fail to describe this matter, for everything that is said will be an image of the reality of that which will come to pass. We see now, that when the sea rises, or an earthquake happens upon earth, how men are dismayed, and how their presence of mind fails them. But when both heaven and earth are overthrown ; when the air, and the sea, and each element suffers from its own perplexity ; when the sun does not give his light, and the moon is full of blood, and the stars are falling ; Who shall be able to eat, or drink, or sleep ? who will be able to take his ease or his rest in the midst of such troubles ? ' Oh, how wretched will then be the condition of the wicked, who are threatened with these signs ; and how blessed that of the good for whom all these things are the sure and certain signs of an eternal Happiness which is awaiting them. How joyfully will these latter exclaim with the holy Psalmist—*GOD is our Hope and Strength, a very present Help in trouble ; therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. Behold, said our Blessed LORD, the fig-tree, and all the trees, when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves, that*

that summer is now nigh at hand ; so likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of GOD is nigh at hand. Then thou shalt be able to open thine eyes, and to lift up thy head, for the Day of Redemption has arrived. How happy then shall the righteous be ; for they shall be greatly rewarded for all their sorrows ; and on the other hand, how dismayed will the wicked be, and how great their condemnation.

Of the End of the World, and the Resurrection of the Dead.

After these signs shall succeed the coming of the JUDGE, preceded by a universal flood of fire, which shall burn and turn into ashes the world, and all the glory of it. This fire shall be to the wicked the beginning of their suffering ; and to the good, the beginning of their glory. And then shall cease the glory of the world, the motion of the heavenly bodies, the course of the planets, the generation of all things, and the change of the seasons. Of this S. John writes—*I saw another mighty Angel come down from Heaven, clothed with a cloud ; and a rainbow upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. And the Angel, which I saw stand upon the sea and the earth, lifted up his hand to Heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever, Who created Heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth and the things that therein are,*

are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer. After this fire—The LORD Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of GOD, and shall summon all nations to Judgment. This is that fearful Voice, of which a holy Saint of old spake, saying—I eat and drink as if I always heard in my ears that Voice saying—Arise, ye dead, and come to Judgment. Who can withdraw from this Summons? Who can excuse himself from this Judgment? Who will not tremble at this Voice? This Voice shall take from death all its captives, and it shall be obliged to restore all that it has killed in the world—The sea gave up the dead, which were in it; death and Hell delivered up the dead, which were in them. How wonderful will it be to see appearing from sea and land such a variety of men of all ages and times and nations, and to see all people joined in one great company. For all the children of Adam shall then arise again, and each one shall be judged according to his works.

But, though they will all rise again, never more to die, how great shall be the difference between their respective fates. The bodies of the righteous shall rise beautiful and bright as the sun; but the bodies of the wicked shall appear as dark as death itself. How joyful shall the holy be to see the fulfilment of their desires, and to be reunited to their brethren, from whom they
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have been so long time banished. With what joy shall the Soul say to the body—O body, my old familiar friend and comrade, who hast aided me to attain to this crown of Bliss, who hast so often fasted with me, watched with me, prayed with me, and endured mortification together with me, the trouble of poverty, the cross of penitence, the contradiction of the world? How often hast thou given the bread out of thy mouth, to the poor? How often hast thou unclothed thyself, to clothe the needy and distressed? How often hast thou given up thy rights, rather than break the perfect law of charity with thy neighbour? It is meet, that thou shouldst be partaker of this Heavenly treasure, since thou hast helped me to gain it. It is right, that thou shouldst be companion of my glory, since thou hast been with me in my afflictions. Then these two faithful friends shall be united, in one body, not as now, with contrary appetites and desires, but in a bond of entire unity, peace, and concord; and then together shall they be enabled to sing eternally—*Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in Unity.*

But, on the other hand, how sad shall the Soul of some lost one become, when she feels her body, which ought to be beautified, painful to look upon. O wretched body, shall the Soul say, O beginning and end of my sorrows; O cause of my condemnation; O not my friend, but mine enemy, not my helper but my hinderer, not my dwelling-

dwelling-place but the cause of my perdition ; O wretched taste, how dearly do thy gratifications cost me now ; O loathsome flesh, for what torments hast thou prepared me, by thy sinful pleasures. Is this the body for which I committed so many sins ? Are these the pleasures for which I have lost myself ? Was it for this that I lost the Kingdom of Heaven ? For this vile body, have I lost enduring Life ? O fires of Hell, rise up against me, and consume me, for I have deserved this punishment. Cursed be the day of my birth, seeing I must now suffer everlasting torments in Hell, to atone for all my short and momentary delights.

These, and other despairing words will those unhappy Souls say to the body they have loved so much in this world. But tell me, O miserable Soul, why dost thou now so bitterly hate, what thou didst formerly so deeply love ? Was not this flesh beloved of thee ? Is not this the face which thou didst preserve so carefully from the sun and the air ? Are not these the arms and hands which thou didst cover with jewels ? Is not this the body for whose sake earth and sea were employed to furnish food for the table, and materials for clothing ? Why are thine affections changed ? Why dost thou now find detestable, what thou didst formerly think beautiful ? Therefore take heed, O Christian Brother, for thou here seest how the glories of the world shall appear in the dreadful Day of Judgment.

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Of the Coming of the JUDGE, and the Manner of Judgment.

At the Resurrection, when all people are assembled in one place, expecting the Coming of the JUDGE, then shall He, Whom Almighty GOD has appointed to be the JUDGE of quick and dead, descend from Heaven. And, as at first He came in great Humility, inviting men to peace, and calling them to penitence ; so, at His Second Coming, shall He come in Majesty and Glory, accompanied by all the powers of Heaven, threatening, with the fury of His Anger, those who have rejected the gentleness of His Mercy. The fear and terror of the wicked shall be so great, that according to the holy Prophet—*They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for the fear of the LORD, and for the Glory of His Majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth.* Lastly, that fear shall be so great, that both the heavens and the earth shall fly from the Presence of the JUDGE, and shall find no place wherein to hide themselves.

Wherefore do ye fly, O heavens? What have ye done? Why do ye fear? And if by heaven is understood the Blessed Spirits who are therein—O ye happy creatures, who were created, and are confirmed in Grace, wherefore do ye fly? What have ye done? Wherefore do ye fear? Certainly they do not fear for their own danger ;

danger ; but they dread to behold in the JUDGE such great Majesty and wrath. That, that will be enough to fill the heavens with fear. When the sea is stormy, even he who is safe on shore is filled with alarm ; and when a father is greatly angered with a servant, his child is afraid, though he has done no wrong, and knows that his father's anger is not raised against him. What then must the wicked feel, if the righteous are so alarmed ? If the heavens flee away, what will the earth do ? If those who have been holy do tremble, what will the worldly ones feel ? And if, as the Prophet tells us, in that Day, the mountains fall down before the Presence of GOD, our hearts must be harder even than the rocks, if these things move them not.

On that Day the holy Standard of the Cross shall come before the JUDGE, as the witness of the Redemption which Almighty GOD has sent into the world, and which the world did not receive. Then the Holy Cross shall justify the cause of GOD, and the wicked shall remain uncomfortable and without excuse. *Then, said our Blessed LORD, then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn ; they shall weep, lament, and strike their breasts ; and oh, what great cause shall they then have for weeping and lamentation. They weep, because they find no place for repentance, and they cannot flee from the wrath to come, nor can they alter their sentence. They weep over their past sins, their present shame, their future torments.*

torments. They bewail their evil destiny, their unlucky birth, and their wretched end. For this, and for many other reasons, they weep and lament as if they were attacked on all sides, without defence and without protection.

Then shall the JUDGE divide the good from the bad; and shall place the goats on the left, and the sheep on the Right Hand. Oh, how great shall be the happiness of those who are considered worthy to be placed among the sheep. Afflict me here, Good LORD, we may well cry out; punish me here; slay me here; burn me here; so that at the last Thou mayest place me on Thy Right Hand. The Judgment shall then begin, and the account of each one shall be examined. Of this the Prophet Daniel says—*I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, Whose Garment was white as snow, and the Hair of His Head like the pure wool. His Throne was like the fiery flame, and His Wheels as burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him; thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him; the Judgment was set, and the Books were opened.* To these words S. John adds—*I saw the dead, small and great, stand before GOD; and the Books were opened, and another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the Books, according to their works.* Behold, therefore, O Christian Brother, the rule by which thou

thou shalt be judged, and beware of the price at which the things thou hast esteemed shall then be valued, not by the judgment of the world, which holds the false weight of Canaan in its hand, which is so little weighed down by virtue, and so much uplifted by vice. In this Book, thy whole life is written down with such care, that not a word comes out of thy mouth but it is immediately noted therein. But of what things dost thou think that we shall have to give an account—*Doth He not see my ways, and count all my steps?* said holy Job. There is not an idle word, nor a single thought, of which we shall not have to give an account; and not only of what we have done, but also of what we have left undone. If thou canst say—LORD, I have not sworn; the JUDGE will say to thee—Has thy servant sworn, whom it was thy duty to rebuke? And not only of our wicked works must we render an account, but also of our good ones, and also of the manner in which we did them. Finally, as a holy Father says—An account shall then be required of every moment of our life, and of the way in which we spent them.

Consider then, if such a strict account shall be demanded of us, from whence does our security and our neglect arise? In what do we place our confidence? With what do we comfort ourselves in the midst of so many dangers? How does it happen, that those who have the greatest cause to fear this Day, fear it the least; and that those

who have little reason to fear, fear it the most? The Patriarch Job was a just man, for Almighty God pronounced that he was so, yet during his life he lived in such fear of the Judgment, that he said—*What then shall I do when GOD riseth up; and when He visiteth, what shall I answer Him?* Surely these are the words of an anxious and sorrowful heart—What shall I do? As if he had said, one care continually wearies me, one trouble is constantly in my heart, and it gives me no rest. What have I done; where shall I go; what shall I answer, when GOD enters into judgment with me? But wherefore shouldest thou fear, O happy Saint; why art thou troubled? Art thou not he who said—*I was eyes to the blind; and feet was I to the lame?* Art thou not he, who said—*My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me, so long as I live.* Behold, O Man of such innocency, why art thou afraid? For this holy Saint knew well that GOD looked not with the eyes of the flesh, nor does He judge with the judgment of men, in whose eyes he often appears righteous, who in the sight of the ALMIGHTY is wicked. How truly just thou wert; and even for this reason wert thou just, that thou didst live in such fear. This fear, Brethren, condemns our false security. This voice exclaims against our vain confidence; for which of us has ever left his food or sleep to think of this thing? For those who do think
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about it as they ought, often lose both their sleep, and their desire for food, and sometimes even more than this. In the lives of the Fathers, we read that one of these holy Men once saw a follower of his immoderately and causelessly laughing, and reproving him sharply, he said—How is it, that knowing thou hast an account to give to Almighty God, in the face of Heaven and earth, how is it that thou dar'st to laugh? It appeared impossible to this Saint that any one could thus laugh who was certain of making this account at the last.

Then, at that Day, accusers and witnesses shall not fail us; for our witnesses shall be our own consciences, which shall give their evidence against us; and witnesses shall be those creatures, whom we have in this life misused. And above all, the same LORD, whom we have offended shall witness against us, as He Himself tells us by the mouth of His holy Prophet—*I will come near to you, to Judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the forcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not Me, saith the LORD of Hosts.* Accusers shall not fail us, for a sufficient accuser will the Devil himself be, who, as a Saint says, will gather many from the Right Hand of the JUDGE, saying to Him—O most Just JUDGE, Thou canst in justice only sentence, give

give me these traitors, for they have always been mine, and have done my will in all things. Thine they were, for Thou didst create them, after Thine Own Image, and hast redeemed them, with Thy Blood ; but they destroyed Thy Image, and did put on mine ; they have despised Thy Commands, and have followed mine. With my spirit have they lived ; my works have they imitated ; in everything they have walked in my ways, and have followed my example. Behold, how much more they are mine, than Thine. I have given them nothing ; I promised them nothing ; I have not laid my life, for their sakes, upon the Cross ; yet, they have always obeyed my commands, instead of Thine. If I had commanded them to swear, to perjure themselves, to commit murder, to blaspheme Thy Holy Name, all this they would have done willingly. If I had ordered them to bestow their lands, their life, their Soul, for some point of honour, or for some base delight, they were ready to risk all for me. But for Thee, Who art their GOD, their CREATOR, their REDEEMER ; Who hast given them possessions, health, and life ; Who dost offer them Grace, and promise them Glory ; and above all, Who didst suffer death for them on the Cross, they will do nothing. How often hast Thou lain at their doors, sick, and in poverty. What alms did they give Thee, but a cruel refusal ; for they were more careful of their own comfort than for Thine, more desirous

firous to spend their money on themselves, than to relieve Thee. And since it has been thus, how right is it, that they should be punished for the injuries which they have inflicted on so great a Majesty.

After having listened to the accusation, the JUDGE will pronounce this awful Sentence upon the wicked—*Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil, and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink.* Who can describe the feelings of those wretched ones, at hearing these Words? They shall call upon the mountains, to fall on them; and upon the hills, to cover them. They shall blaspheme and rage. Out of their lips shall proceed sacrilege against the ALMIGHTY, cursing the day of their birth, and their unhappy destiny. Then shall their day be ended, their glory passed away, their prosperity overthrown, and in their bodies the day of their sorrow shall begin and last for ever. As the Beloved Apostle tells us, in the Book of Revelation—*The Kings of the earth, who have committed fornication, and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torments, saying—Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city, for in one hour is Thy Judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandize any more . . .*
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The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, saying—Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls ; for in one hour so great riches is come to nought.

Therefore, Brethren, if this must all come to pass, let us prove our own selves, whilst we have time ; let us follow the counsel of Him, Who would rather be our ADVOCATE than our JUDGE. None can know better than He, what is needful for us in that Day, for it is He Who will judge our cause. In a few words He teaches us what we must do—*Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that Day come upon you unawares. . . . Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things, that shall come to pass, and to stand before the SON of Man.*

Consider this, and deliver yourselves from this fate before the dark night of death falls upon you ; and before that dreadful Day comes, of which the Prophet Malachi says—*Behold, He shall come, saith the LORD of Hosts ; but who may abide the day of His coming ? who shall stand, when He appeareth ?* Certainly that man shall be able to abide that Day of Judgment, who shall prevent the Hand of the JUDGE, and shall judge himself now, when it is called to-day.

Fifth



Fifth Consideration.

OF THE PAINS OF HELL.

Of the Pains of Hell: Of some Advantages which arise from considering the Pains of Hell: Of the two kinds of Pain suffered in Hell: I. Of the Pain of Sense, 1st, of the outward Sense of the Body: Of the Pain of Sense, 2nd, of the inward Sense of the Soul: II. Of the Pain of Loss: Of other Special Pains of Hell: Of the Eternity of the Pains of Hell.

Of the Pains of Hell.

FIFTHLY thou must meditate on the Pains of Hell; for this consideration, as well as the preceding one, confirms thy Soul more strongly in the Fear of God, and in the hatred of sin.

The pains of Hell, says a holy Father, may be conceived by the figure of earthly similitudes to be bodily torment, as the writings of the Saints teach

teach us. Hence, it will not be difficult for us to imagine, by the help of these figures, the place of Hell as an obscure and dark lake beneath the earth ; as a bottomless pit full of fire ; or as a gloomy city, where no other sound is heard, save the raging of the tormentors, and the lamentations of the condemned, who are perpetually groaning, and gnashing their teeth.

In this horrible place, two great sorrows are suffered ; one is called the pain of sense, which afflicts the senses ; and the other, the pain of loss, the loss of all losses, which is GOD. As to the first of these pains, consider that there is no sense of man which does not suffer its own peculiar torment. For as the wicked have offended Almighty GOD with all their senses and members, and have used them as instruments of sin ; so, He has ordained, that all the senses shall be tormented, and that each one shall suffer its own peculiar torment, and pay its own special debt. Then shall the impure and unchaste eyes be tormented with the horrible sight of demons ; the ears, with the confusion of voices, and groans, which continually resound ; the sense of smell, with the constant smell of the filthy lake ; the sense of taste, with ravenous hunger and unquenchable thirst ; the sense of touch, and all the members of the body, with unbearable heat and cold. Again, the imagination shall be tormented with the fear of present suffering ; the memory, with the remembrance of past pleasures ; the under-

understanding, with the consideration of lost Good and future evil. Lastly, united in one, all the torments that can be thought of shall be experienced.

Consider, says a Saint, they shall have cold which they must endure ; fire which they cannot appease ; the worm which dieth not ; an intolerable smell ; darkness which may be felt ; the scourge of the tormentors ; visions of devils ; the confusion of sins ; and a despair of all that is good. Tell me, then, if the least of these evils, which are suffered here for a short space of time, are so difficult to bear, what will it be to suffer such accumulated sufferings in all our members, and in both our inward and outward feelings, not for the space of a single day, but for an eternity ? What sense, what intellect in the world can realise this ?

Consider again, that this is not the greatest pain suffered in Hell ; there is another which is incomparably greater, and which by theologians is called the pain of loss, the pain of being deprived of the sight of Almighty God, and His glorious Company. And though this sorrow is common to all the condemned, it will be much greater to those who at first appeared destined to enjoy it ; as all Christians to whom the Gospel has been preached, and all wicked Catholics, who, having had greater helps, and more means to attain everlasting Happiness, are the more grieved at having lost it.

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These are the pains common to all the condemned ; but beyond these general pains, there are particular ones, which will befall each one according to the measure of his sin. There shall be one sort of punishment for the proud ; another for the curious ; another for the unchaste ; and so on with other sinners. In all the Wisdom of Divine Justice will shine forth most brightly, which amongst so many sins, and so many sinners, knows perfectly the excesses of each one, and will weigh in a balance the extent of his sin. For *a just weight and balance are the LORD'S*. Oh, what can be more sad to the wicked than to see how Almighty GOD will repay them ; and what can be more marvellous to the good, than to witness this wonderful proportion of punishment, for such a multitude of sins. There the pain will be proportioned to pleasure received ; and humiliation, to presumption and pride : poverty shall be measured by former abundance ; and hunger and thirst, with past excess. In this manner the ALMIGHTY commanded that the Woman, mentioned in the Apocalypse, should be punished ; she, who sat upon the waters of the sea, with a cup in her hand full of poisonous pleasures and delights, and against whom was thundered out from Heaven that terrible sentence — *How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously ; so much torment and sorrow give her*. And to all these pains and torments will be added the eternity of punishment, which is as it were the

the complement of them all; for all the rest might be tolerable if they could have an end, since we think nothing unbearable of which we know there will be an ending. But pain which has no end, no alleviation, no change, nor hope of any change, neither of the suffering, nor of Him Who inflicts it, nor of him who suffers it; this is indeed enough to make a man consider this matter with the utmost attention.

From this eternity of torment, arises the hatred which those wretched Souls feel for Almighty God; and those blasphemies which they utter against Him. For when they know that they have lost all hope of His Love, that they can never again be received into His Favour, that their pain will never be diminished, when they see that it is GOD Who inflicts it, and Who shuts them out from Heaven, then they are so infuriated, that they cease not neither day nor night from blaspheming His Holy Name.

*Of some Advantages which arise from considering
the Pains of Hell.*

The meditation on the Pains of Hell is profitable in many respects. It appears to move us to greater and more bitter acts of penitence, as a holy Saint tells us of himself, for in consequence of the great fear he had of Hell, he condemned himself to such a severe life, that he went and dwelt in the desert. Again, it helps us to conquer

quer the temptations of the enemy, when, at the first beginning of evil, we place before our imagination this hideous place and all its horrors, and by this means we conquer the flame of passion before it burns, with the remembrance of the flames of Hell. It is written, that a holy Father being once tempted by the Devil to an evil thought, he put his hand upon a burning coal, to see if he could bear it; and when he found that he could not bear the pain, he asked himself—How he could suffer the fire of Hell for ever?

This meditation will also awaken in our hearts the Fear of GOD, which is the beginning of Wisdom, and of the Love of GOD; and therefore the greatest antidote we can have against sin. And besides this it increases our abhorrence of sin by shewing us the fearful consequence which is ordained to punish it—everlasting death; and hence it is much to be wondered at, that we, who are thus created, should dare to commit sin against Almighty GOD. Two great wonders have arisen in the world. One is this, that although our Blessed LORD wrought so many Miracles, many refused to believe in Him; the other is, that after having been made Christians, and believing in Him, there are so many men who continually offend Him. It was very wonderful that when our Divine SAVIOUR performed the Miracle of raising Lazarus to life, who had been four days dead, many of those present would
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not believe in Him; and that many now, who do believe in Him, and believe that they shall either inherit eternal pain or bliss, should dare to offend Him. It is astonishing that all this being believed, there is so much infidelity in the world; and with such faith, there are such corrupt lives. And because this proceeds rather from want of thought, than from want of faith, it is a profitable exercise to consider what our Holy Faith teaches us; so that knowing what is meant by the pains of Hell, we may live in greater dread of sin, so as not to deserve these dreadful torments.

Of the two kinds of Pain suffered in Hell.

Although the pains of Hell are innumerable, they may, as has already been said, be reduced to two—the pain of sense, and the pain of loss. The pain of sense, is that torment which afflicts the senses and bodies of the condemned; and the pain of loss, is the being deprived for ever of the vision and presence of Almighty God. These two kinds of torment answer to two kinds of sin; one of which, is inordinate love of the creature; the other, the contempt of the CREATOR. Thus, the inordinate love of the creature is punished by the pain of sense; for as it is by their senses they have sinned against GOD, by the tormenting of those senses they are punished. And the contempt of the ALMIGHTY is punished by the loss of GOD; for, as man first rejected his CREATOR,

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it is only just that he should be forsaken of Him. Of these two evils, the last is incomparably the greatest; and therefore the pain of loss, which is the punishment for this sin, is undoubtedly greater than the pain of sense.

I. Of the Pain of Sense, 1st, of the outward Senses of the Body.

Let us now begin by considering the pain of sense; and first, of the pain of the outward senses. The first is a fire of such heat, that according to a holy Father, a fire in this world is but an imaginary flame when compared with it. This fire not only torments our bodies, but also our Souls; and in such a manner, that it shall not consume them, because the pain is to be eternal. And this, says a Saint of old, is a mighty Miracle; because God gives strength to this flame, that it may torment, and a special virtue that it does not consume.

Consider then, what those wretched ones must feel, who are condemned to remain in this place for ever; and that thou mayest understand it the better, be prepared to imagine what thou personally wouldst suffer, if thou wert placed in some burning fiery furnace, like the one which Nebuchadnezzar caused to be made in Babylon, and to be heated seven times more than it was wont to be heated. By this thou mayest faintly conjecture what is suffered in Hell; for if the
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fire in this world burns so fiercely, how awfully shall the fire of Hell burn? It does not seem to me needful to consider the pains of Hell any further, if only a man will stop awhile, until he has examined into this matter as closely as it requires.

Another pain, and a no less intolerable one, joined to the former, is a horrible cold, exceeding any in the world, which freezes those who burn in the fire; for, as it is written in the Book of Job—*Drought and heat consume the snow waters*, so it is ordained, there should be no kind of torment, of which they shall not taste.

Not only are they tormented with heat and cold, but also by Devils, who appear to them in the shape of wild beasts, hideous monsters, with terrible appearance. And this is a much greater pain than can well be imagined; for if, as we know, some persons have lost their senses, and some have even lost their life, from fear; how dreadful the fear of that dark lake must be, which is full of such horrible fiends, who are there presented to the eyes of the wicked. For, consider how dreadful the appearance of the Devil himself must be, as he is thus described in the Book of Job—*Who can discover the face of his garment; . . . who can open the doors of his face? his teeth are terrible round about; his scales are his pride, shut up together, as with a close seal; one is so near to another that no air can come between them; they are joined one to another; they stick together, that they*

they cannot be sundered; by his neefings a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning; out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out; out of his nostrils goeth smoke as out of a seething pot or cauldron; his breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. Oh, how fearful the sight of this horrible monster will be.

To the torment of the eyes, is added another pain, that of the nostrils, which are afflicted by the horrible stench of Hell. Thus does Almighty God threaten sinners by His Prophet Isaiah—*Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks, and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, . . . it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; instead of a girdle, a rent; instead of well set hair, baldness; instead of stomacher, a girding of sackcloth; and burning, instead of beauty.*

In order that we may imagine something of this pain, let us consider the horrible torture which a tyrant invented to put men to death. He took a dead body, and had it laid beside a living one; and he then ordered that they should be tied together, and remain so, until the dead body should cause the death of the living one by its very corruption. Now if this torment appears to be so horrible, what shall that pain of Hell be, which shall proceed from the corruption of the bodies of the condemned, and from the place where they are to remain for ever? Then shall

shall the words of Isaiah be verified in each one of the lost Souls—*Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols; the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.*

If this is the pain appointed for the sense of smell, what shall be that torment with which the ears are afflicted; for with the ears men commit even greater sins? They shall be tormented with perpetual cries, lamentations, and blasphemies. For as in Heaven there is no sound but Alleluias and continual praise; so is there nothing heard in this place of torment but blasphemies, and cursings, and the discordant cries of many voices. And that thou mayest imagine something of this pain, think that thou art passing through some dark valley full of prisoners, some of whom are sick, others of whom are wounded, but all of whom are uttering cries, and howling each after his own manner; and think how great will this noise and confusion be. Consider then, how dreadful the noise of the lost Souls shall be, who have nothing else to do but to blaspheme Almighty God, and His Saints.

Nor shall the tongue, nor the sense of taste be less tormented; since we read in the Holy Gospel, what the rich man, even in Hades, suffered; and of the cries he uttered to the Holy Patriarch, beseeching him for one small drop of water to cool his tongue.

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Of the Pain of Sense, 2nd, of the inward Senses of the Soul.

However grievous the pains of the outward senses of the body may be, the suffering of the inward senses of the Soul must be infinitely greater; for they shall be more or less tormented, according as the sinner has been more or less sinful.

First of all, the imagination shall be tormented with such vehement apprehension of these pains, that it will never be able to think of anything else. For when a sorrow is acute, we cannot turn away our thoughts from it; because sorrow awakens the imagination, so that we oftentimes can only think of what we are suffering. But how much more will this be true in Hell, where the grief and the pain is so much greater. Thus, the imagination shall awaken and renew the grief; and likewise grief, the imagination; and thus the torments of the condemned shall be increased on every side. These shall be the constant meditations of those, who, in this life would not think of these pains; and those who would not bridle their affections in this world, shall thus suffer for it in the next.

Next, the memory of the lost will torment them, by recalling to their mind their former happiness and past pleasures, for which they are suffering such torture. They shall then clearly see

see how much their miserable pleasures have cost them; and how much punishment is prepared for those gratifications which were so dear to them. Above all mere earthly miseries, a wise man has said, the greatest is to live in prosperity, and afterwards to come to penury. Now when the rich and powerful look back and remember the prosperity they used to enjoy, and then reflect how, to such abundance, such dearth succeeds, that they have not even a drop of water to drink; that all their pleasure ends in trouble, their gratifications in misery, their perfumes in loathsome smells, their music into groans, what torment can be greater than the remembrance of these things? And it shall still be greater, when they compare the duration of their past pleasures with that of their present trouble; for the pleasure lasted but for a moment, but the pains of Hell shall endure for ever. What a sorrow that shall be, when they see that the whole of their life was but a shadow, which quickly came to an end; and that, for their pleasures and delights, they now suffer eternal torments.

These are the pains which afflict the memory; and those which the lost suffer in the understanding shall be much greater, when they consider the Bliss they have lost. From this proceeds that worm of conscience which is so often mentioned in Holy Scripture, and which night and day preys upon the lost. As the worm bred from the tree, always feeds on the tree which
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gave it birth ; so this worm, which is born of sin, always feeds upon the sin from which it was produced.

The worm of conscience, indeed, is a sort of raging remorse, which the lost shall suffer from for ever and ever, when they consider what they have lost, why they have lost it, and the opportunities they have possessed not to lose it. Their lost opportunities never pass away from the memory ; and the worm of conscience, although it is in vain, is constantly preying upon them, and causes them to complain, saying—Oh, wretched man that I am, I had time to gain that blessed State, which the Saints enjoy, and I would not avail myself of it. Time was, when this Happiness was offered to me ; I was exhorted to receive it ; but I would not accept it. By one single hearty act of confession, I should have been forgiven all my sins ; by duly seeking once for pardon from Almighty God, it would have been granted me ; for one single cup of cold water given to the poor, I should not have lost my reward. But now, even if I fasted for ever, and wept, and repented for ever, all would be fruitless. Oh, how wickedly did I spend that time, which shall never more return. What benefits have I received from the world, to make me risk, aye, and to lose the happiness of Heaven ? If all the riches and kingdoms of the world were given me, to enjoy them for as many years as there is sand in the sea, all would be
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as nothing in comparison with the pain I suffer here. I have not had the benefit of any of these things, but only the dream of past pleasures; and for this I must suffer these eternal torments. Oh, miserable delight; oh, cursed exchange; oh, wretched hour, in which I was so blind; oh, how a hundred-fold more unhappy am I, for having thus deceived myself. Cursed be he, who did not correct me; cursed be she, who brought me forth; cursed be the milk that nourished me, the bread I ate, and the life that I lived. Happy are those who never had any being; yea, blessed are the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck.

Thus will those wretched ones curse all created things, especially those who were the cause of their perdition.

In the Lives of the Saints, we read of a holy Man, who saw in a vision a very deep well full of flames, and in the middle of the flames were a father and a son cursing one another. The father said—Cursed be thou, my son, for I became a usurer, that I might make thee rich; and that is the reason why I am in Hell. And the son said to the father—Cursed be thou, my father, for thinking to make me rich, thou hast destroyed me; thou didst leave me riches dishonestly gained, and as I did not make restitution, I am everlastingly condemned.

Above all these shall be the torture of the will, in malicious and evil disposed persons. These shall

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shall always perpetually envy the glory of God and His Saints; and this envy will prey upon them not less than the worm of conscience. Of this sorrow the Psalmist speaks, saying—*The ungodly shall see it, and it shall grieve him; he shall gnash with his teeth, and consume away; the desire of the ungodly shall perish.* Others shall be possessed with a fearful hatred of Almighty God, for keeping and chastising them in this place. And, as a mad dog, pierced with a lance, turns to bite it; so, were it possible, would the lost turn against God, because they know that it is He Who punishes them with the Sword of Divine Justice. They are very obstinate in evil, for they are not sorry that they have been wicked; but grieve rather that they have not been worse. Besides this, they continually despair of God's Mercy and Pardon; they know they can hope for nothing from Him; and this is the cause of their blasphemy against Him. And as they are certain that there will be no end to their pains, they revenge themselves as much as possible by their rage and fury against God.

II. Of the Pain of Loss.

Who would believe that besides all these pains, there is still a greater one? For it is certain, that all these pains are as nothing compared with the one we are about to speak of. The former
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belong chiefly to the pains of sense and feeling ; but afterwards comes the pain of loss, which is without comparison greater. This is clearly evident, if we consider that this pain in lost Souls is the being deprived of some good thing which they once possessed, or desired to possess. Now the greater this good thing is, the more pain must there be in losing it ; and thus it appears in temporal losses, the greater the loss, the deeper is the sorrow. Therefore, as Almighty God is the Chief of all Good, it is evident that the being deprived of Him is the greatest of all evil. Besides this, GOD is the Centre of the reasonable Soul, and the Place where she has perfect rest. And hence, it is evident, that the separation of the Soul from GOD, is the greatest sorrow she can suffer. On this subject a Saint of old well said—That a thousand fires of Hell in one cause not the Soul so much pain, as does her separation from GOD.

Words cannot explain the greatness of this sorrow, and the tearing away of children from their mother's breast, and their being dashed in pieces, is as nothing compared to this perpetual banishment from GOD. But that thou mayest realize something more of this torment, meditate awhile upon the cruel death with which tyrants tormented some of the holy Martyrs of old. Sometimes they ordered the tops of two trees to be bent to the ground, and to each end of them one of the feet of the Martyr was tied ; and then they

they loosened the branches, that they might return to their natural position, and the body of the Martyr was horribly torn asunder. Now if this division of the body causes such torture, how much greater pain shall the separation of the Soul from GOD cause, Who is not a part, but the whole essence of our Souls; especially since this separation must endure—not for so short a time as whilst the branches of the trees fly back again from the ground, but—for ever and ever.

Of other particular Pains of Hell.

Besides all these pains, there are others; these are the pains common to every one of the lost, but there are particular ones, which are proportioned to each one according to the magnitude of his offence, as the Prophet Isaiah says—*In measure when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it; he stayeth his rough wind, in the day of the east wind.* The *rough wind* signifies the terribleness of Divine Anger, and the sentence which punishes temporal sins with eternal punishment; the *measure* shall be the quantity and proportion of the pain, according to the description and extent of the sin.

Consider how the marvellousness of Divine Justice here shines forth, giving to each his due, regulated by the greatness of his offence. Thus, says a holy Doctor, thus shall the avaricious be punished with the most wretched poverty; the sloth-

lothful shall be forced into constant activity ; the glutton shall be tormented with hunger and thirst ; the sensual and impure shall be assailed with flames of brimstone ; the envious shall howl with internal pain ; and the proud and presumptuous shall be filled with perpetual confusion.

O ye idolaters of the world, ye lovers of honour, ye that are greedy of gain, ye inventors of new pleasures ; O inhabitants of the miserable city of Babylon, who will bewail over you in the mournful accents of our Blessed SAVIOUR—*If thou hadst known, even thou, in the midst of this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ; but now they are hid from thine eyes ?* Oh, if thou hadst known how dear thy gluttonies would have cost thee, and how full of shame were the idols thou didst adore, it would have been well with thee. If a man eat fruit before it is ripe, his teeth are set on edge ; and in like manner, though worldly men have their enjoyments here before their time, the day assuredly will come when their unseasonable gratifications shall set their teeth on edge. And thus the Prophet tells us—*Every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.* Therefore, those who will enjoy in this life, the delights which are prepared for them in the life to come, shall afterwards feel the bitterness of that joy, when they are punished by the Justice of Almighty GOD, for having sought enjoyment before their time.

Of the Eternity of the Pains of Hell.

If all these torments are of themselves so great, what will they become when we add that they are eternal? When a thousand years have passed away; and after those years, shall succeed as many millions of years, as there are stars in the sky, or sand in the sea, after all this time has passed away, then shall the lost begin, as it were, to suffer again; and thus shall the wheel of their suffering be perpetually turning round for ever. *For, says the Prophet, Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the King it is prepared. He hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the Breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.* Tophet is the bottomless pit of Hell, prepared long since, for the punishment of the wicked. It is fed with fire, which never consumes; and the Breath, which kindles the fire, can never end nor diminish with continuance of time. It would surely be a great gain if we could understand something of the eternity of these torments; for, without all doubt, it would be the greatest restraint upon the actions of our lives. And therefore we shall give a few examples, that they may help us rightly to understand this matter.

Meditate then on that torture which is used in some countries, by which malefactors are burnt alive; and the greater their offence, the smaller is

is the fire which is to consume them. But what is the longest time that man's torment can continue? Scarcely can it last more than a single day. Tell me then, I beseech you, if the torture which lasts only for a day is so terrible, what will be that fire which is to endure for ever? Now, if a man to escape from this death would take any amount of care and trouble, what ought we not to do to escape from the torment of Hell fire?

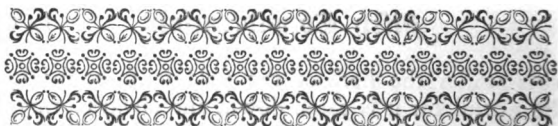
Think again of the fearful torture devised by that tyrant, who caused those on whom he wished to be revenged, to be put within a brazen bull, under which a fire was lighted, and the wretched ones were burnt by degrees. Who would not shudder at the thought of this? But what is this in comparison with that torment which is to come? It is but as a dream, or a mere shadow. If this thought is enough to frighten us, what will be—not the thought of, but—the actual bearing of the torment? Truly it is so horrible to suffer eternal pain, that if there was only one amongst us who should suffer it, it would be enough to make us all tremble. One alone of the Disciples of CHRIST was about to sell his Divine MASTER; and yet, when our Blessed LORD said—*One of you shall betray Me*, they all became *exceeding sorrowful*. How is it then that we do not fear knowing that the number of the wicked is infinite, and that as the LORD JESUS Himself says—*Strait is the gate, and narrow is the*

the way, which leadeth unto life; and that, as the Prophet says—*Hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure*. If we do not believe this, where is our faith? If we do believe it, if we have judgment and reason, wherefore do we not publish and preach it in the streets? How is it that we do not fly to the deserts, as did the Saints of old, to live amongst wild beasts, that we might escape from these torments? How can we sleep at night? How is it that we do not lose our senses, by imagining ourselves in such great danger; since other and less fearful things than this have been enough to drive men distracted?

Since this is the greatest pain from which those wretched ones suffer, to know that Almighty God and His Punishments endure for evermore, they can have no consolation, because their misery shall never end. If they could believe, that after a long space of time their pains would cease, it would be the greatest of comforts. But their pains shall never end; and, as said a Father of old—*The wicked shall have death without death, end without end, and misery without relief*; because their death is always living, their end is always beginning, and their misery is never relaxed. Therefore did the holy Psalmist say—*They lie in Hell like sheep; death gnaweth upon them*. The grass which is grazed upon does not die, because its root, the source of life, remains alive, and it grows up again in the spring. For this

this reason the herb of the field is, so to speak, immortal, for it is eaten down, and always springs up again. In this manner does death feed upon the lost ones; and as death cannot die, it shall never weary of this food, nor ever cease from devouring. For death shall always find something in them to devour; and they shall always provide something for death to feed upon; so that in Hell they shall suffer the most dreadful pains for ever and ever. Amen.





Sixth Consideration.

OF THE BLISS OF HEAVEN.

Of the Bliss of Heaven : Of the Encouragement which is derived from meditating on the Bliss of Heaven : Of the First Joy of Heaven, the Excellency of Heaven : Of the Second Joy, the Communion of Saints : Of the Third Joy, the Vision of Almighty God : Of the Fourth Joy, the Glory of the Bodies of the Elect : Of the Fifth Joy, the Eternity of Bliss.

Of the Bliss of Heaven.



EDITATE now, O Christian Soul, upon the Happiness of everlasting Glory, which is a very profitable meditation ; and, if aided by the brightness of a lively faith, it will enable thee to think all the troubles which thou dost suffer here on earth to be of little moment. For if the love of home, makes all the trials of home to be forgotten ;

gotten ; and if the love of her child repays the mother for the labour of its birth ; what will be the love of this eternal Happiness, in comparison with which all other happiness is as nothing ? If the Patriarch Jacob said, that the *seven years* which he *served for Rachel*, seemed unto him *but a few days for the love he had to her* ; what will not the love for that exceeding Beauty, and that eternal Union become to us, if contemplated with the eye of faith ?

In order that we may understand somewhat of this Bliss, let us consider five points which compose it ; first, the Excellency of the Place ; secondly, the Joy and Communion of the Saints ; the Vision of Almighty God ; after that the Glory of the Bodies of the Elect ; and lastly, the Eternity of Bliss.

Consider, first, the Excellency of the Place, and its wondrous vastness. When we read, that the planets in our System are far greater than the earth, and that some of them are manifold times as great ; when we raise our eyes to heaven, and see the number of the stars, and consider that the firmament contains others greater still ; how is it that we are not amazed at the immensity of the Place, and much more, at the Almightyness of that Sovereign LORD, Who created all out of nothing ? No words again, can express its beauty ; for consider, if in this vale of tears, and place of banishment, Almighty God has created marvellous and beautiful things, what
then

then must He have created in that Place, which is the Seat of His Glory, the Throne of His Greatness, the Palace of His Majesty, the Home of His Elect, and the Paradise of all Delights?

Besides the excellency of the Place, think upon the nobleness of the inhabitants thereof; whose number, greatness, and holiness, whose riches and beauty exceed human thought. S. John tells us, that their number is so great, that it cannot be counted. A Saint of old says, that there are so many Angels, that they exceed without comparison all created things on earth. Another Holy Man says, that as the heavens exceed the earth in vastness, so does the number of these glorious Spirits exceed all material and created things in this world. What can be more wonderful than this? Certainly, if thought upon attentively, it is enough to make us marvel. If one of these Holy Angels, even the least of them, is more beautiful than ought else in the visible world, what a glorious sight it will be, to see such a countless number of Spirits full of beauty, and to witness the various duties which fall to the lot of each in that Heavenly City. There do the Angels perform God's Bidding; the Arch-angels minister, the Principalities triumph, the Powers rejoice, the Dominations govern, the Virtues shine, the Thrones glitter, the Cherubim give light, the Seraphim burn with Divine Love, and all unite in singing the praises of Almighty God. If the companionship of
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the good and holy on earth is so sweet and pleasant to the Soul, how blessed will it be, ever to be in communion with so many Angels and Saints, to speak with the Holy Apostles, to converse with the Prophets and to hold intercourse with the Martyrs, and to dwell for ever with GOD's Saints.

Again, if it is such happiness to enjoy the company of the good, what glory it will be to be in the Presence of Him, Whom the Stars of the morning worship, at Whose Beauty the sun and moon do wonder, before Whom the Angels bow themselves, and at the Sight of Whom men rejoice. What will it be to see the Universal GOOD, in Whom is all other Good ; and Him, Who being ONE, yet comprehendeth all things, and is full of all Perfection. If it was thought so great a privilege to hold converse with Solomon, that the Queen of Sheba said—*Happy are thy men ; happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee ;* what a blessed thing it will be, to behold that Great SOLOMON, that Eternal WISDOM, that Infinite GREATNESS, that Inestimable BEAUTY, that Exceeding GOODNESS ; and to enjoy this Beatific Vision for ever. This is the glory of the Saints ; this is the ultimate end and centre of all our desires.

After this, meditate upon the glory of our bodies, in which there shall be nothing that is not glorified ; for each sense shall then possess its own special perfection, and the objects in which

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it delights. And each glorified body shall be endued with these four special qualities, which the Apostle S. Paul reveals to us in the fifteenth Chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, incorruptibility, radiancy, impassibility, and spirituality, which shall so shine forth, that each glorified body shall be like the sun, in our Heavenly FATHER's Kingdom.

In a word, in the consummation of all things, all Good shall be found united in one Divine Kingdom, and all wickedness shall be banished thence for ever. For there, there shall be health without weakness, liberty without bondage, beauty without decay, abundance without want, peace without distraction, security without fear, knowledge without error, satiety without disgust, joy without sadness, and honour without contempt. There, says a Holy Father, shall there be true glory ; for none shall ever be praised, either by error, or by flattery. There, shall there be true honour ; which shall never be denied to those who deserve it, which shall never be given to those that are not meet to receive it. There, shall there be true peace ; for no one shall ever be molested. The reward of virtue shall be He, Who granted Grace to produce the virtues, and Who has promised Himself, as virtue's exceeding great Reward. He shall be the End of all our desires ; He shall be seen without end, loved without satiety, and praised with unweariness and joy. His Heavenly Home is beautiful, resplendent,

dent, and secure. There, time is always the same ; ever present, without past, without future ; not divided into night and day, but continuing the same for an everlasting Eternity. There, shall there be perpetual summer, which shall flourish for ever, continually refreshed by the Life-giving Breath of the HOLY SPIRIT of our GOD. There, there shall all be joy ; and all shall ceaselessly praise the Supreme GIVER of it all, through Whose Goodness all shall reign as Kings, and live for ever in glory. O Heavenly City, O blisful Habitation, O blessed Country, where all pleasant things are to be found. O happy people, who never murmur. O quiet neighbours, where no one is subject to need nor want. Oh, that the strife of this present state was ended. Oh, that the days of my pilgrimage were over. When will that happy day arrive ? When shall I see, in Beatific Vision, the Face of my REDEEMER ? When shall I come to appear before the Presence of my GOD ?

*Of the Encouragement which is derived from
meditating on the Bliss of Heaven.*

One of the things, on which we should keep our eyes fixed in this vale of tears, is the happiness of future Glory ; for this consideration is enough to encourage us to bear all sorrows, which we may have to endure in this present life. When GOD said that He would give unto
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the Patriarch Abraham the Land of Promise, He commanded him to rise, and to look round about him, saying—*Arise, walk through the Land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for, I will give it unto thee.* Do thou arise also, O my Soul, arise and go on high; leave behind thee all the cares of life; fly, with the wings of thy Spirit, to that blessed Land of Promise; and meditate attentively on the length of its eternity, the breadth of its happiness, the greatness of its riches, and on all the other things which it possesses.

It is written, that when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame and the wisdom of Solomon, she came to Jerusalem to see the great King of whom she had heard so much. Consider then, that the renown of the Heavenly Jerusalem and the Supreme KING Who reigns there, is not less than the fame of Solomon. Ascend therefore in spirit to this noble City, and contemplate again the Wisdom of this Sovereign KING, the beauty of the Temple, the orders of those who serve Him, the fame and glory of that noble City. But in order rightly to contemplate this mystery, thou needest, and must ask, for that special Gift of God, of which the Apostle speaks—*That the GOD of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the FATHER of Glory may give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know, what is the hope of His calling, and what the*

the riches of the Glory of His Inheritance in the Saints. And, although there are many things to be contemplated in this Glory, thou must meditate on those five points of which we have spoken above.

Of the First Joy of Heaven, the Excellency of Heaven.

Let us first meditate on the Beauty of Heaven, which is thus described to us by the Beloved Disciple—*There came unto me one of the seven Angels . . . saying—Come hither ; I will show thee the Bride, the LAMB'S Wife ; and he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great City, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from GOD, having the Glory of GOD, and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal ; and had a wall great and high ; and had twelve gates ; and at the gates twelve Angels And the foundations of the wall of the City were garnished with all manner of precious stones ; and the twelve gates were twelve pearls, every several gate was of one pearl. And I saw no Temple therein ; for the LORD GOD Almighty, and the LAMB are the Temple of it. And the City had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it ; for the Glory of GOD did lighten it ; and the LAMB is the Light thereof. And he showed me a pure River of water of Life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of*
O 2 GOD,

GOD, and of the LAMB. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the River, was there the Tree of Life, which bare twelve manner of Fruits, and yielded her Fruit every month; and the leaves of the Tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse; but the Throne of GOD and of the LAMB shall be in it, and His servants shall serve; they shall see His Face, and His Name shall be in their foreheads and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Behold then, the exceeding beauty of that City; not that thou mayest think that there are material things in it, but that by means of them spiritual things may be conceived, which are figured to us by them. The seat of this City is above all the heavens; and its greatness and extent are boundless. For, if each of the stars is so great, how great must be that Heaven of heavens, which contains them all? No earthly measure is comparable to it.

Again, no tongue can declare the workmanship of this Edifice; for, if what we see with our mortal eyes is beautiful; what shall that be, which is looked upon by immortal eyes? If the works of even men are so full of beauty, what shall be the perfection of that Work, which is wrought by GOD Himself, in this Everlasting Home, in this Sacred Palace, in the House of Rest, which He has built for the glory of His Saints? *O how amiable are Thy Dwellings, says the Holy Psalmist, Thou LORD of Hosts; my Soul bath*

bath a desire and longing to enter into the Courts of the LORD.

One thing that usually decides the character of a city, is the condition of its citizens, whether they be noble, numerous, and well governed. Who then is able worthily to declare the excellency of this Heavenly City? All its inhabitants are noble; for, they are the children of GOD. They live in such peace amongst themselves, that they are all of one Soul, and one mind; and they live in such concord, that this Blessed City is called Jerusalem, or the Vision of Peace. If thou desirest to know the number of its population, thou shalt be answered in the words of S. John—*I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, stood before the Throne, and before the LAMB, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.* The Prophet Daniel also agrees as to the number of this holy multitude—*Thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.*

And reflect, that the greatness of the number is, not a cause of confusion, but rather of greater order and harmony. For Almighty GOD, Who has so wonderfully ordered the motion of the heavens, and the course of the stars, calling each one of them by their name, has also ordered this great and happy Concourse, with such marvellous Wisdom, that each one has received his own place

place and measure of glory, according to his deserts. There is one place for the chaste Virgins and one for the brave Confessors, another for the holy Martyrs, another for the Patriarchs and Prophets, the Apostles and Evangelists, and another for the rest of the Faithful. The Holy Angels too, are divided into three Hierarchies, and nine Choirs; and over all, the Sacred HUMANITY of our Blessed LORD presides, Who sits at the Right Hand of the Majesty of Almighty GOD. O Christian Soul, do thou ascend in Spirit and wander amongst these celestial Choirs, and behold these noble Citizens, this beautiful City. Salute this Sweet Country; and as a pilgrim, beholding it from afar, send up thither thine heart, and lift up thine eyes, and say with fervour—Hail to thee, dear Country, promised Land, Asylum of Safety, Harbour of Refuge, Home of Bliss, Kingdom of all nations, Paradise of all Delights, Garden of eternal Flowers, Crown of everlasting reward, and Object and End of all our desires.

Of the Second Joy, the Communion of Saints.

Who is able, after this great Joy, to speak of the exceeding Bliss they shall derive from the companionship of the Blessed Ones who dwell on high; for there, the virtue of Charity shall flourish in all its perfection, and causing all things to be enjoyed in common? There, shall that
petition

petition of our most Dear LORD be fulfilled—*That they all may be One, as Thou, FATHER, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be One in Us.* The Elect shall be even more united than the members of the body are one; since they all participate in the same Spirit, which gives to all one being, and one blisful life. Consider, why is it that the members of one body have such a bond of love and union between them? Surely, it is because they are knit together in, and are partakers of one Soul, which gives life to all. Now, if the spirit of man has power to cause such complete unity between members of a body that are so different from one another; how much more shall that DIVINE SPIRIT, by Whom all the Elect live, and Which is, as it were, the common Soul of all, cause even a greater, and more perfect Unity.

Again, love and union are enabled to make all things common, even as we see amongst members of the same body, and in the love of mothers for their children, who rejoice as much at their happiness as in their own. What great joy then shall the Saints have, sharing the glory of others, for they all love each other as they love themselves? A Holy Bishop says—That this Heavenly Inheritance shall be one, in all things; because the Saints rejoice as much at the felicity of others, as if they possessed each of these joys themselves. Now, what follows from this, except that as the number of the blessed is infinite,
their

their joy will also be infinite. Each one of them will possess the excellencies of all; for there is nothing in any one, which all the others do not possess. They are in mystery the seven spiritual sons of Job, between whom there existed such concord, that each of them, in his turn, gave a weekly feast to his brethren. From this it resulted, that none of them benefited more in the goods of the other, than in their own; and thus, there existed amongst these brethren a holy brotherhood of love.

Now as the company of the Elect is so great, how great shall be the brotherhood of love, of riches, and of possessions, which they enjoy? What a glorious Feast shall that be, given unto us by the Seraphim, who are the highest Order of Spirits, who stand nearest to Almighty God, and who shall discover to us the nobleness of their condition, the clearness of their contemplation, and the fervour of their love? What a Feast shall the Cherubim give, who are the Keepers of the treasures of the Wisdom of God? What a Feast also shall that be, given by the Thrones, the Dominations, and by all those glorious Spirits? What joy it shall be to be in the glorious Company of the Holy Apostles; to see the goodly Fellowship of the Prophets; to behold the noble Army of Martyrs, clothed in white, with palms in their hands, the symbol of their triumph; and to look upon the countless Confessors and Virgins, and other Holy Men and
Women

Women who were partakers of the Cross of CHRIST? What a pleasure it will be to see that glorious Deacon, with a gridiron in his hand, himself more resplendent than the flames in which he was burnt; and that holy Virgin, who conquered over the cruel wheel, with the arms of faith and love? What joy it will be, to behold those seven noble Maccabees and their devoted Mother, who despised death and torture to keep the Law of GOD? What a goodly sight it will be, to see those Holy Innocents, whose blood was shed when our Blessed LORD was born? What necklace of gold shall be so beautiful to behold, as the neck of the glorious Baptist, who was content to lose his head, rather than fail to rebuke the wickedness of the sinful King? What purple shall shine, like the body of the Blessed Bartholomew, who was flayed alive for the Faith of CHRIST? What delight shall it be to see the body of S. Stephen, which was bruised with stones, but now is clothed with the radiance of rubies and emeralds? And ye, O ye glorious Lights of the Church, SS. Peter and Paul, how brightly shall ye shine, one with the Sword, and the other with the Standard of CHRIST. Oh, glorious Feast; Oh, true Banquet; Oh, worthy Table, for GOD and His Chosen Ones. Let the lovers of the world enjoy their own banquets, but such a Feast as this is only meet for GOD and His Elect.

Ascend in spirit still higher, O my Soul, and
behold

behold another Glory, which makes the whole Court of Heaven to rejoice, and which, with its marvellous sweetness, inebriates the whole City. Lift up thine eyes, and look upon that pure and spotless Virgin, full of Grace and Beauty, at whose Glory Angels and men rejoice and wonder. This is the Ever-Virgin Mother of God crowned with stars, clothed with the sun, and shod with the moon, the *Blessed amongst women*. What joy it shall be to see her, not now on her knees before the Manger; not now assailed with the fear of those things which holy Simeon prophesied; not now weeping and seeking for her Lost CHILD, but with unspeakable Peace and Happiness, sitting at the Right Hand of her Blessed SON, without further fear of losing her Divine Treasure. She shall no longer be obliged to hide from the wrath of Herod. She shall not again be seen at the Foot of the Cross, receiving upon her head Drops of His most Precious Blood. No longer shall those sorrowful words be heard—*Would GOD, that I had died for Thee, O ABSALOM, my SON, my SON*. Now all is over; and she, who in this world was the most afflicted amongst women, is now the most highly exalted, enjoying for ever that Chiefest GOOD, and saying—*I found Him, Whom my Soul loveth; I held Him, and would not let Him go*.

And what a still greater joy shall it be, to behold the Sacred and Sinless HUMANITY of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the Beauty of that
BODY,

BODY, which was so marred upon the Cross. A holy Saint has exclaimed—What a sweet thing it shall be, for created men to behold that MAN, the CREATOR of men, and LORD of all created things. We esteem it an honour for one with whom we are connected, to be made a Prince or a Bishop; what exceeding honour then shall it be, to see that same Blessed LORD, Who is of our flesh and of our blood, sitting at the Right Hand of His FATHER, the KING over Heaven and earth. How honourable shall men feel amongst the Heavenly Host, when they see that the LORD of all is not an Angel, but a MAN. For if members account that to be an honour to themselves which is honourable to their head, from the union which binds them to their head; what honour shall that be, when such an intimate union exists between the human members and the Head Divine, but that the Saints shall account the Glory of their LORD to be their own glory? This joy shall be so great, that words fail to express it. Who then of us will be so blessed, as to be thought worthy of such Bliss? *Oh, that Thou wert as my Brother, that sucked the breasts of my Mother; when I should find Thee without, I would kiss Thee.* O most Sweet LORD JESU, when shall the day come for us to appear before Thee; when shall we be satiated with Thy Beauty; when shall we be allowed to behold that Blessed Countenance, which the Angels desire to look into?

Of the Third Joy, the Vision of Almighty GOD.

This Joy shall be above all the former; and in this Joy consist the essential Glory of the Saints. All the things we have spoken of are great motives towards attaining our glory; but all of them are small in comparison with the Beatific Vision of GOD.

Of Issachar it was said of old—*He saw that rest was good, and the Land, that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.* The rest and glory of the Saints is great; but the Land, which brings forth this rest is excellent in the highest degree, because this Land is the Countenance and Beauty of GOD, from Whose Vision the glory and the rest of the Saints proceed. This Vision is of itself alone enough to give perfect Bliss to our Souls; for though the sweetness and gentleness of the creature may give satisfaction to the human heart, they cannot wholly satisfy and fulfil it. And if we rejoice at the sight of the Angels, how much more glorious it shall be to look upon that Face, that Light, and that Beauty, from Which all other beauty shines. What joy shall it be to behold that adorable Essence, and to see in It at one glance, the Mystery of the Ever-Blessed TRINITY, the Glory of the FATHER, the Wisdom of the SON, the Goodness and Love of the HOLY SPIRIT.

There

There shall we see GOD ; and in GOD, both ourselves and all besides. As a Holy Saint says —That even as he who holds a looking-glass before him sees himself reflected in it, and also all things which are before the glass ; so shall we, when we behold that clear and spotless Looking-glass of the Majesty of Almighty GOD, Present before us, see Him, and ourselves in Him. There, the longings of our understandings shall cease ; we shall desire to know no more, because we have before us all Knowledge. There our will shall rest, in loving the Universal Good, in Whom all Good things are contained. There, shall our desires be satisfied with that Supreme Joy, Which will so fulfil our hearts, that we shall have nothing more to desire. There, shall those three virtues, faith, hope, and charity, with which GOD is honoured here, be perfectly rewarded ; for to faith will be given the unveiled Vision of GOD ; to hope, possession of Him ; and to imperfect charity, charity in all its perfection. There, again, shall we love, enjoy, and praise Almighty GOD. There, shall we have abundance without satiety, and hunger without need. There, shall there be sung continually *as it were a new song before the Throne* ; because, though it is always the same Song of Adoration, yet it is ever new as to taste and sweetness. The Joys of the Saints never wax old, as after a time on earth their bodies were wont to do ; for He, Who causes the heavens to be the same as when they

they were created, shall also cause the Saints to live for ever, without any decay or change.

Of the Fourth Joy, the Radiancy of the Bodies of the Elect.

The clear Vision of Almighty GOD is, as it were, the essential Glory of the Blessed Souls in Heaven; but that most Just JUDGE and FATHER, not content with glorifying their Souls, extends His Bounty so far as to glorify their bodies also. Oh, what love for men; oh, what honour for the good; what right hath our corrupt nature to aspire to the Sanctuary of Heaven? What right hath this vile flesh to be placed amongst the Holy Angels? Rather, let dust continue with dust; for it is not fitting that earth should be placed in Heaven. But He Who blessed Ishmael, even though he was the son of a bond-maid, because he was the son of the Father of the Faithful, shall also show His Favour to the bodies of the Saints, on account of their being so closely allied to the Souls which He hath purchased with His own most Precious Blood. It is of the LORD's Will, that he who has helped to bear the burthen, shall also be a partaker of the Glory. And as the Soul which, in this life, is resigned to the holy Will of GOD, comes at last to participate in His Glory; so the body also, which against nature conforms to the will of the Soul, shall be a partaker of its Glory.
Thus

Thus shall the just be rewarded both in body and in Soul, and shall possess in that Promised Land a double inheritance, the Glory of both Soul and body.

What, again, can be said of the Glory of the senses, each one of which shall realise its own perfection? The eyes, renewed and enlightened above the light of the sun, shall behold those Divine Palaces, those Fields of beauty, and other things infinitely beautiful. The ears shall always hear the sweetest music, one strain of which would be sufficient to enchant the world. The sense of smell shall be rejoiced with sweet odours; not such as we perceive here, but in proportion to the glory of the Place. The sense of taste shall be gratified with incredible sweetness; not to sustain life, but for completion of Bliss. Think then, what the happy Soul will feel, when instead of the mortification of the senses, which lasted for so short a time, they shall be surrounded with a flood of Glory, without finding any termination to their joy. Oh, labours and services, well rewarded; oh, treasures, not so much to be spoken of, as to be desired, and to be purchased with a thousand lives, if we had them to give.

Of the Fifth Joy, the Eternity of Bliss.

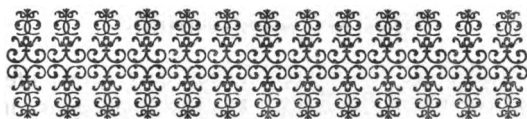
Let us now see what will be the duration allotted to so much blessedness. This alone would be enough to make us desire all sorts of

affliction, that we might please God in this life, Who is about to bestow such gifts upon us, in that Life which is to come. This great Reward shall endure for as many millions of years, as there are stars in Heaven. It shall last as many thousands of years, as there are drops of water falling upon the earth. In a word, it shall last as long as God Himself lasts, for ever and ever ; and therefore is it written—*Thy Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and Thy Dominion endureth throughout all ages.*

O FATHER of Mercies and GOD of all consolation, we implore Thee, of Thine exceeding Pity, that we be not deprived of this supreme Glory. O LORD GOD, Thou Who hast willed to create me in Thine own Image, fill my heart, I beseech Thee, with Thyself, and let my portion be in the Land of the Living. O LORD, I beseech Thee, give me not rest in this transitory life ; but reserve it all for me in that everlasting Life. *But one thing have I desired of the LORD, which I will require ; even that I may dwell in the House of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the fair Beauty of the LORD, and to visit His Temple.*



Seventh




Seventh Consideration.

OF THE DIVINE BLESSINGS.

Of the Divine Blessings: Of the Benefits which arise from Gratitude for the Divine Blessings: Of the First Divine Blessing, our Creation: Of the Second Divine Blessing, our Preservation: Of the Third Divine Blessing, our Redemption: Of the Fourth Divine Blessing, our Vocation, or Calling: Of the Fifth Divine Blessing, our special Blessings.

Of the Divine Blessings.

ASTLY, thou must meditate upon the Divine Blessings, in order that thou mayest give thanks to Almighty God for them; that thy love may increase for Him, Who sent thee such good things; and that thou mayest feel more deeply thy offences against so Good a Benefactor. Although these Benefits

Benefits are innumerable, they may be reduced to five chief Blessings ; 1st, the Blessing of our creation ; 2nd, the Blessing of our preservation ; 3rd, the Blessing of our Redemption ; 4th, the Blessing of our vocation, or calling ; and 5th, our particular Blessings which we each severally receive.

Of the Blessings of our creation, consider first, what thou wert before thy creation ; and what GOD has done for thee, and has bestowed upon thee. Before thou hadst any being, He gave thee being, thy body, thy limbs and members, thy senses and feelings, and thy immortal Soul, which He created after His own Likeness, for the blessed end of enjoying the Presence of GOD. He also gave thee these three noble powers of thy mind—understanding, memory, and will. In giving thee thy Soul, He gave thee all things ; for it is clear that there is no perfection in any inferior creature ; that man possesses it in an eminent degree ; and that it is on account of his Soul, that he obtains this marked pre-eminence. Therefore, in giving us our Soul, He gives us that which includes everything else.

Of the Blessing of our preservation, observe how thy whole being is protected by Divine Providence ; and how thou couldest not live without His Almighty Aid ; how the whole world was created to serve thee ; and how the Holy Angels are entrusted with thy Protection. Consider also, the health, the strength, the life,
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the sustenance He gives thee, besides other and many more temporal blessings. Above all, ponder well upon the disasters which happen to other men ; into which thou mightest also have fallen, had not the All-merciful God preserved thee from them.

Of the Blessing of our Redemption, consider two things ; the great Gifts which GOD gives thee by means of this Blessing ; and secondly, how much He suffered in His Sacred Person, that He might obtain it for thee.

Of the Blessing of our vocation or calling, consider the great Mercy of GOD in calling thee to this Faith, by means of Holy Baptism ; as well as in making thee a partaker of His other Blessed Sacraments. And, if after thy first calling, thou didst lose thy Baptismal innocence, and He raised thee up from sin, brought thee back again unto Grace, and placed thee once more in a state of Salvation, how canst thou ever thank Him sufficiently for these inestimable Blessings ? Consider again, how great the Mercy, which has guarded thee all this time ; which has born with thy many sins ; which has sent thee so many inspirations, and has not cut thee off in the midst of thy wickedness ; and, last of all, which has called thee with His Grace, that thou mightest rise from death to life, and mightest open thine eyes to the Light eternal. How great the Mercy which, after thy conversion, gave thee Grace and Strength to return no more
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into grievous sin, to conquer the enemy, and to persevere in good works. This is that early and latter rain, which Almighty GOD promised by the mouth of His holy Prophet—*Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your GOD; for, He hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain.* Which means, that Almighty GOD, not only prevents us with His Heavenly Grace, but also, that He is our abiding Help, Who brings the seeds of holiness unto a fruitful and happy end.

These are the general and well-known Divine Blessings, but there are others which are particular and special to each individual Soul; these are secret ones, which he only knows, who has received them; and there are others, which even he who receives them does not know, but only He Who grants the Blessings. For example, how often, on account of thy pride, thy negligence, or thy ingratitude, hast thou deserved that GOD should take away His Grace from thee and forsake thee, as He has often forsaken others, for any one of these causes, and even for less? For whoever falls away from GOD, it is from some of these or similar causes; and yet has He dealt with thee, as with others? How many evils has the LORD of His good Providence prevented, overthrowing the snares of the enemy, and not permitting him to tempt thee above that thou art able? How often has He done for thee

thee what He did for S. Peter—*Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat ; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.* And who could know all these secret Blessings, which He has bestowed upon thee, but GOD Himself? His positive Benefits may easily be known ; but, who can know these secret ones, which consist, not in giving us good things, but in delivering us from evil ones? For these Blessings, then, as well as for others, let us give humble and hearty thanks to the ALMIGHTY, knowing full well, how much more we are indebted to Him, than we can either understand or repay.

Of the Benefits which arise from Gratitude for the Divine Blessings.

One of the greatest complaints which the LORD makes against man, and which will tell most against him at the last Day, is his ingratitude. With this does the Prophet Isaiah open his Prophecy—*Hear, O Heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the LORD hath spoken—I have nourished, and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knoweth his owner ; and the ass, his master's crib ; but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider.* A Holy Saint says of these words—The Prophet would not compare man with animals of more understanding, with the dog, for instance, which for a morsel

mouse of bread defends his master's house ; but with the ox and the ass, animals which are more dull and senseless ; that it may be understood, that ungrateful men are not to be likened to any of the animal creation, but only to the lowest, and most brutish of them.

What punishment, then, does this great ingratitude deserve ? God has prepared many sorrows for the thankless ; but the most just, the most ordinary of them all, is to withdraw from them the Benefits which they have received ; since they do not return to the Giver of all, the thanksgiving which they owe unto Him. For, as a Saint has said—Ingratitude burns up the river of Divine Mercy, the fountain of His Clemency, and the current of His Grace.

Consider also, that as ingratitude is the cause of much evil, so is gratitude the beginning of great holiness, and especially of these three following Graces. The first is the Love of Almighty God ; for, as a wise Man of old has said—Goodness is lovely of itself, and every one is naturally inclined to love his own Good. For, as men are naturally such lovers of themselves, and their own good ; when they see clearly, that all is the Gift of the same Gracious Benefactor, they are at once disposed to love Him, from Whom these great Benefits flow. Thus it comes to pass, that amongst the most touching considerations, to increase within us the Love of God, is to meditate upon the Divine Blessings ;
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for each one of these Benefits is as a firebrand, which kindles and increases the fire of this Love.

This meditation is also profitable, to awaken in man a desire to serve GOD, when he considers the great obligation he is under to Him, Who has given man such good things. For if the birds and beasts, on this account, answer to the Voice of Him Who calls, and if they obey all which that Voice commands; how much more ought we to do the same, who have received greater benefits, and are more able to understand them. Thirdly, gratitude for Divine Blessings awakens in our Souls sorrow and repentance for sin. For, when a man meditates on the numberless Blessings he has received from GOD, on the one side, and on the other, on his own innumerable sins; how can he help being confounded and ashamed at his exceeding wickedness, compared with the greatness of that Highest GOOD, Who has continued so long to benefit him, even whilst he has persevered in evil?

For these three ends, a man ought to meditate upon the Divine Blessings; and to be careful to apply his heart, at one time to gain the Love of his CREATOR; at another, to obtain a desire of serving Him, and a sincere sorrow for sin; and at a third, to offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, which the Prophet desires us to pay for Blessings received, saying—*So will we render the calves of our lips.*

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And although these Benefits are innumerable, we will only treat of these five kinds of Blessings, as we have said before, which are so comprehensive, that under them all others may be considered; namely, the Blessings of our creation, of our preservation, of our Redemption, of our vocation or calling, and our particular and special Blessings. It is not necessary that we should think of all these Benefits at one time. It is enough to ponder well upon one or two points, for the exercise of meditation is not to be viewed as a task which can come to an end, but rather as the daily food of our Souls, which the more temperately it is made, the better it is digested, and the more serviceable it becomes to man.

Of the First Divine Blessing, our Creation.

We will first begin with the Blessing of our creation; and that thou mayest know how great is this Blessing, thou must meditate attentively on what thou wert before thy creation. This is the principal advice which the holy Fathers were wont to give upon this subject, in order that they might understand the greatness of this Blessing, and also might clearly perceive that a man is of himself nothing. Thou wert nothing from Eternity, and thou mightest have continued to be nothing for ever and ever. Thou wert less than the earth; less than the air; less than a straw; in fact, thou wert absolutely nothing. Consider then,

then, how, being nothing, thou couldst never of thyself have become anything; for he who is nothing, can neither do, nor deserve anything. Therefore, thou being in this abyfs of nothingness, before thou didst deserve it, the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of GOD, of His pure Love for thee, exercised His Omnipotence to draw thee out of nothingness into being. In a word, He willed that thou shouldest be something. And as a holy Father adds—And not only something, for there is nothing equal to man, who is the noblest being of GOD's creation. He made thee what thou art. He gave thee thy body, and enriched it with limbs and members, and with senses and feelings, in such a wondrous manner, that each portion of thyself is, if thou dost well consider thyself, a mighty marvel. It is of this Blessing that holy Job spake, when he said—*Thine Hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about; yet Thou dost destroy me; remember, I beseech Thee, that Thou hast made me as the clay, and wilt Thou bring me into dust again? Hast Thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews. Thou hast granted me life, and favour, and Thy visitation hath preserved my Spirit.*

Besides this, consider the nobleness of thy Soul; the high end for which it was formed, and the Divine Image in which it was created.

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The image of thy Soul is that of GOD Himself; for, in truth, there is nothing in earth more like unto GOD; there is nothing by which we can more perfectly attain the knowledge of Him, than by the knowledge of the Soul itself. And this is partly the reason, why we cannot comprehend the nature of our Soul, because it is like unto the Divine Nature, which in this life cannot be known. And the end for which this noble work of GOD's creation was created, corresponds to this dignity of similitude; for we know that it was created to participate in the Glory of GOD, to dwell in His Heavenly Home, to enjoy what He enjoys, to put on the same robe of Immortality in which He is arrayed, and to reign with Him everlastingly in Bliss. From this it arises, that the Soul is endued with the marvellous capacity which it possesses, and which is so great, that all the riches and pleasures of the world, and all the inhabitants thereof are utterly unable to satisfy it.

What then shall we render unto the LORD for this great Blessing? If we owe so much to our earthly parents for having contributed something to the formation of our body; what do we not owe to our Heavenly FATHER, Who created our Soul, which is so immeasurably more important, and without which the body would be but mere living corruption? What are our parents, but the instruments by which GOD made a portion of the work; and if we owe them
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gratitude, how much more are we indebted to the Chief Agent Who entirely created it?

Of the Second Divine Blessing, our Preservation.

Not satisfied with having created thee in such dignity and glory, it is GOD Who likewise preserves thee, as He tells thee by the mouth of His Prophet—*I am the LORD thy GOD, Which teacheth thee to profit, Which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.* Some mothers are content with giving birth to their child, without afterwards actually nursing or taking charge of it. But with us it is not so; for the same Almighty GOD takes charge of us altogether, and in such a manner, that He is both the Mother Who bore us, and the Nurse Who nourishes us with the Food of His Divine Providence. And this He testifies of Himself in the words of the Prophet—*I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.* So that He is both the Creator and Preserver of all; and as without Him nothing was created, so without Him can nothing be preserved. Of both of these things does the holy Psalmist speak, saying—*The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O LORD, and Thou givest them their meat in due season. When Thou givest it them, they gather it; and when Thou openest Thy Hand, they are filled with good; when Thou hidest Thy Face, they are troubled; when Thou takest away their breath, they die, and*

are turned again to their dust. In the same manner in which the movements of a clock depend upon the pendulum, so does the whole mechanism of the world depend solely upon Divine Providence; so that if That failed, all the rest would immediately come to nought.

But consider how many Divine Benefits are contained in this one. Every moment of thy life forms a portion of this Blessing; for thou couldst not exist if the ALMIGHTY withdrew His Eyes from thee for a single moment. All creatures in the world are ministers of this Blessing, for they are all made to serve the same end. So that Heaven and earth are thine, the sea and all that therein is, the trees, and the animals; in a word, all creation, since all was dedicated to thy service. Of this the holy Psalmist speaks—*What is man, that Thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou madest him lower than the Angels, to crown him with glory and worship. Thou makest him to have dominion of the works of Thy Hands, and Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and whatsoever walketh through the paths of the sea. O LORD our Governor, how excellent is Thy Name in all the world.*

But not only has Almighty GOD appointed all visible creatures for the service of man, but of His infinite Mercy He has also appointed invisible

visible ones, those Spiritual Beings who are always in His very Presence; for, as the Apostle says—*Are they not all ministering Spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of Salvation?* In truth, the whole world, O my Soul, is occupied in serving thee, in order that thou, in thy turn, mayest employ thyself in the Service of GOD. There is no creature, either below or above the heavens, who is exempt from serving thee; and therefore there should be nothing within thee that is not devoted to His Divine Service.

And though, perhaps, thou hast passed quickly over these things, thou must not hurry over the great Mercies of GOD, Who has delivered thee from many miseries which befall other men. In truth, this world is nothing but a sea of trouble, for there is hardly a house in this spiritual land of Egypt where there is not some kind of weeping and lamentation. Who is it, that has exempted thee from this? Who is it, that hath given thee the privilege of being in health amongst all manner of disease? Art thou not a man like the rest; a sinner, like the others; a son of Adam, like all? And if all temporal ills come, either from natural causes, or from their sins, the very same causes are within thyself; why then do they not produce the same effect in thee? Who is it that hath done this? Who hath turned away the torrent of distress, that thou mightest not perish as others have done?

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What, but the Grace of GOD? Consider this matter well, and thou shalt find that all the ills in the world are for thy benefit, and that for each one of them thou owest especial acts of thanksgiving and love to the ALMIGHTY. And as in the Blessings of preservation thou findest, that all the good things of this world are bestowed upon thee for thy benefit; so thou must also allow, that the very miseries of this world are benefits unto thee, inasmuch as thy LORD has delivered thee from them all.

Of the Third Divine Blessing, our Redemption.

We now come to the inestimable Blessing of Redemption—although it might be better to adore this holy Mystery in silence, than to speak of it with mortal lips. Through sin thou didst lose thy first innocence and grace in which thou wert created, and Divine Justice might have left thee in that miserable state, as it left Satan, without remedy. But on the contrary, it pleased the ALMIGHTY to turn His Anger into Mercy, bestowing on thee greater Blessing, when He had received the greater provocation. And though He might have restored thee to thy first innocence, by sending an Angel for thy Redemption, He willed to come in His Own PERSON, not in Majesty and Power, but in Humility and Poverty. This He did, in order that He might make thee love Him all the more for this
Benefit;

Benefit ; to make thee more grateful to Him ; to redeem thee more abundantly ; and to make thee know Him, Who so loved thee, the more intimately, that thou mightest accordingly seek Him, and hope in Him, and trust in Him. This is He of Whom the Prophet of old spake—*In all their affliction, He was afflicted; and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His Love and in His Pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and vexed His HOLY SPIRIT, therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.*

And if thou dost owe so much to thy LORD, in that He has redeemed thee ; how much more shalt thou owe Him, for the manner in which He hath redeemed thee—by suffering such pain and sorrow. It would be a great act of mercy for a King to pardon a criminal the sentence he deserves ; but that the King should receive the punishment in the culprit's stead, is incomparably a greater act of condescension. Consider then, how many Benefits are contained in this one Blessing of Redemption. Lift up thine eyes to that Holy Cross, and gaze upon the fearful Wounds which the LORD of All suffered there. For each one of these Wounds didst thou receive a Blessing. Behold that spotless Body covered with Wounds and Bruises. Behold that sacred Head bowed down with weakness ; and the Divine Countenance, which Angels desired
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to look into; how it is overspread with Blood, and how it has lost the flower of its Beauty. Behold that Holy Nazarene, as the Prophet says—once *purser than snow* and *whiter than milk*, now become *blacker than a coal*, and so changed that He is hardly known even by His friends. Behold that sacred Mouth, how wan it is; and those blessed Lips, how parched have they become; and yet they move, intreating for pardon and mercy, even for His very enemies.

In truth, there is not a whole part in His sacred Body; for He is covered with Wounds. That Divine Forehead, those Eyes more beautiful than the sun, are now darkened by the presence of Death. Those Ears, which have listened to the harmonies of Heaven, now hear the blasphemies of sinners. Those Almighty Arms, which embraced the powers of the world, are now extended on the Tree of Shame. Those sacred Hands, which created all things, and which never injured anyone, are pierced and torn with nails. Those blessed Feet, which never *walked in the way of sinners*, are cruelly wounded. And above all, behold the Bed, whereon the Heavenly SPOUSE is extended at noonday; how narrow, and how hard it is. How is it that He has no one, upon whom He can rest His sacred Head? O most blessed Countenance of my SAVIOUR, how is it that I see Thee so afflicted, for love of me? O sacred Body, conceived by the HOLY GHOST, how is it that I see Thee, thus wounded
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for love of me? O most sweet, and loving Side, what means this gaping Wound; and say, what means this quantity of Blood? Alas, how is it that I see Thee, thus wounded by a lance? O most memorable Cross; why art thou still unbending; abate a while thy hardness; incline to me thy branches, that I may embrace, and feed upon thy most Precious Fruit. O most cruel nails, unloose those innocent Feet and Hands; and enter into my heart, and wound thou me instead. O Good JESU, Who has afflicted Thee, with such great sorrow, with death, with the Cross; for, it is I that have sinned, and not Thou?

Truly, the Prophet had good reason to say, that His Work should be *strange*. What is more strange to Life, than death; what more strange to Glory, than pain? What is more remote from the highest Holiness, than the image of a sinner? Certainly this Figure, and Title is very strange to Thee, O most Blessed LORD. O True JACOB, Who, clothed in the garments of others, hast purchased for us the Blessing of the FATHER; for in taking upon Thee the form of a sinner, Thou didst gain for us a victory over sin. O ineffable Goodness, O undoubted Love, O unheard of Charity, O incomprehensible Mercy. Tell me, Good LORD, what didst Thou see in us; what have we done for Thee; how have we caused Thee to suffer such torments on our behalf? O wondrous Bounty, which, without
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our deserving it, but only out of Thine infinite Grace and Mercy hast sought to redeem us, by this Means—*The kindness, and love of GOD our SAVIOUR toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His Mercy, He saved us.* How desirous was our Gracious LORD, that we should understand His Mercy, when He said, through His Prophet—*Thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of Me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought Me the small cattle of thy burnt-offerings; neither hast thou honoured Me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense; . . . Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins; thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine Own Sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put Me in remembrance; let us plead together; declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.*

O most Merciful LORD, what is there in me, to repay Thee for so great a Benefit? If I had the lives of all the sons of Adam, and all the years of the world; and if I could bear the sorrows of every man who has ever lived, does live, or ever shall live, all this would be as nothing, to repay Thee for the least of the sorrows Thou hast suffered on my account. Since then I cannot discharge this debt, let me repay Thee, O my God, by never forgetting Thee. I implore Thee, Dear LORD, of Thine infinite Charity, that
 Thou

Thou wouldest so pierce my heart with Thy Wounds, that wherever I turn, I may always see Thee Crucified; and that wherever I look, I may ever behold Thy most Precious Blood.

Let this be my consolation, always to be crucified with Thee; let this be my affliction, never to think of anything but Thee. Behold, O my God, the Price with which Thou didst redeem me, and grant that so precious a Treasure, may not have been offered up in vain.

Of the Fourth Divine Blessing, our Vocation, or Calling.

Thou must now meditate upon the Blessing of thy vocation or the calling of Almighty God, without which all other Benefits, would only tend to thy greater condemnation. Now there are two kinds of calling; the one to our Holy Faith, by means of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism; and the other unto Grace, after we have lost our Baptismal innocence.

Consider, what a Blessing was thy first calling, when thou wert cleansed from original sin, delivered from the power of the Devil, and made a child of God, and an inheritor of His Heavenly Kingdom. There He took thy Soul to be His Spouse. There He adorned it with the qualities needful for so high and holy a condition, that is with the sevenfold Gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT; and with many other Graces, far more precious

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than the jewels which were given to Rebekah, when she was taken to be the wife of Isaac. Now, what hast thou done to deserve all this? How many thousands, by the just Judgment of GOD, have never received this Blessing? What would have become of thee; hadst thou been among them; not knowing the One, Very, and True GOD, but only worshipping idols of wood and stone? How much art thou beholden to thy LORD, Who, amongst so many lost ones, has placed thee amongst the number of the redeemed; Who has willed thee to be born in the Holy Catholic Church; and Who has caused thee to be nourished in the Faith of the Blessed Apostles, and with the most Precious Blood of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST?

And if, alas, thou hast sinfully lost thy first innocence; and if it has pleased thy Divine LORD to call thee a second time, or it may be, many times, how much more dost thou not owe unto Him? How many Blessings are contained within this single one? For it was a great Benefit to wait so long for thy conversion, and to give thee time for repentance; to suffer thee to continue so long in a state of sin, and yet, withal, not to cut thee down, as an unfruitful tree, which cumbereth the ground, and in vain receives the genial influences of Heaven. It was another great Blessing to suffer such grievous sin to be committed; and yet, to refrain from sending thee to perdition, where perhaps, there are many who have sinned less

less deeply than thyself. Another of GOD's Blessings, it was, to send thee such holy Inspirations, although thou wert in the midst of sin; and to persevere so long in calling thee, who hast done little else but offend thy Divine Master. It was also a great Benefit for Him to bring thy resistance to an end, and to call thee with His All-powerful Voice, from death unto Life; that thou mightest arise, like a second Lazarus, out of the sepulchre of thy sins, not with hands and foot bound, but unloosed from the bands of the enemy. But above all, what a Divine Benefit it was, not only to pardon thy sins, but to grant thee Grace never more to return unto them; and also, by means of Grace, to enable thee to remain a child of GOD, to triumph over Satan, and to take pleasure in the things of Heaven, which thou didst formerly forsake for the things of earth.

Consider, again, to how many others the ALMIGHTY has refused this Grace, which He has so freely granted unto thee? And though thou wert a sinner like unto them, GOD has left them in their evil condition, and has called thee to a state of Salvation. With what gratitude, with what service, canst thou repay this great Mercy? What joy shall it be, when, by reason of thine accepted vocation, thou shalt one day be called to enjoy for ever the Beatific Vision; whilst thy friends, who neglected the call of Grace, will be hopelessly sorrowing in Hell. Oh, how many Benefits are contained in this one Blessing.

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Consider, when the penitent Thief who by one faithful petition attained to everlasting Life, sees himself in such Glory, and his companion thief doomed to eternal torments; and when he remembers that he also had blasphemed our Blessed SAVIOUR, and that, notwithstanding, those Merciful Eyes have looked upon him—what thanksgiving does he not render to Almighty God in return for His Mercy? How much he must have wondered at so blessed a judgment; and how much he must have loved Him Who had bestowed such great gifts upon him. Now, if this Benefit appears to be great to thee, remember that thy LORD has granted thee the same Blessing, when He vouchsafed to cast His Eye upon thee, though He called not thy friend, who perhaps was less guilty than thou, with the same Divine Voice. How much then art thou bound to the LORD JESUS, for this, His great Benefit; and what an opportunity is offered thee, that thou shouldest desire even death itself for the love of Him.

Above all, consider what this Benefit cost thy SAVIOUR, which was given to thee so freely. He gives it to thee out of pure Love to Thee; and yet, it cost Him His very Life's Blood; for without this, He could not have pardoned our sins, He could not have healed our infirmities. And if thou wilt realize the extent of this great Blessing, remember that thou wert once dead in thy sins, and that thy most Pitiful LORD, as the
Pelican

Pelican is said to do, moved with compassion for thee, pierced His Sacred Side with the soldier's lance, and washed the wounds of thy Soul with His own most Precious Blood; and thus by His Death gave thee Life, and by His Wounds healed thine infirmities. Be not ungrateful, then, O my Soul, for so rich a Blessing; but remember, with thankfulness, the day in which thou didst come out of the spiritual Egypt. This was thy Passover, the day of thy resurrection; for, upon that day, thou didst pass through the Red Sea of the Blood of CHRIST, to the Promised Land; and with Him, thou hast risen from death unto Life eternal.

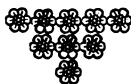
Of the Fifth Divine Blessing, our Special Blessings.

These are all general Blessings; but there are others, particular Blessings, which are contained in each one of these general Blessings, and which for the most part, can only be known by the person who receives them. Such are the Blessings of fortune, of nature, of Grace, which the LORD JESU has given to each one of us; and also the many dangers, both of Soul and body, from which He has mercifully preserved us, and for which we ought to be always grateful, as they are tokens of the special love which our Dear LORD bears towards us. These are Blessings that cannot be written, except in the heart of each one; but all may render hearty thanks for them to the ALMIGHTY.

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There are also other Benefits, which are so secret, that even he who receives them knows not of them ; such as the hidden dangers and snares, from which the LORD, of His Good Providence, preserves him. Who can tell, from how many temptations Almighty GOD has preserved him ; or from how many occasions of sin He has delivered him ; or how often He has disarmed the enemy, that his arrows might not touch him ? The Devil himself said—That GOD had *made an hedge* round about the Holy Job, that nothing should hurt him ; and even so does the LORD keep and protect His chosen ones, that nothing may harm them.

As we may well have received these Blessings, without being aware of them ; and in the same manner, we may commit many secret sins, which we know not of : Wherefore, my beloved Brethren, we ought daily to pray in the words of the inspired Psalmist—*O cleanse Thou me from my secret faults* ; we ought every day to yield Him humble and hearty thanks for these secret Blessings ; so that, by this means, no sin may remain without our repentance, nor any Benefit without our thanksgiving.



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